



# Fire or Promote the Best?

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Things looked bad recently for Leland Dudek, an employee of the Social Security Administration.

Dudek [almost got fired](#) for helping the DOGE team understand how SSA's systems work so that DOGE could zero in on wasteful or fraudulent payments.

On social media, Dudek wrote: "At 4:30pm EST, my boss called me to tell me I had been placed on administrative leave pending an Investigation. They want to fire me for cooperating with DOGE ...

"I confess. I helped DOGE understand SSA. I mailed myself publicly accessible documents and explained them to DOGE.... I moved contractor money around

to add data science resources to my anti-fraud team.... I asked where the fat was and is in our contracts so we can make the right tough choices."

An investigation? Administrative leave? For helping, as an executive-branch employee, the head of the executive branch to find and extirpate waste and fraud? SSA managers may have been confused about whether Donald Trump really is the president.

The suspense didn't last long.

Dudek was not fired. Instead, the SSA commissioner was fired and Dudek [became](#) acting commissioner.

"There are many good civil servants," says Senator Mike Lee, "who have been quietly frustrated for years with politically motivated mismanagement [and] who possess an encyclopedic knowledge of the problems with their agencies. Put them in charge, hand them scalpels and flamethrowers."

Could we have at long last found the cure for dimwitted obstructionism? A certain reality TV star had words for it: "You're fired!"

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.