

Thousands march across New England to protest Trump administration, Elon Musk

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Demonstrators waved signs and cheered during the Hands Off! rally at City Hall Plaza in Boston on April 5. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Mobilized by angst and dissatisfaction over the Trump administration's handling of the nation, thousands of New Englanders took to Boston, Concord, N.H., and Providence streets in a national day of protest Saturday to chant down the president and his controversial billionaire ally, Elon Musk.

They rallied against policies including the administration's rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs; its targeting of gender-affirming care; and its immigration crackdown that has led to the detention of international students, including a Tufts University graduate student. The protestors also spoke out against what they called the administration's "illegal and unconstitutional power grabs."

“This is a people’s march!” said Kate Merritt-O’Toole, a retired operating nurse at the Veterans Administration and an organizer who showed up early for the Boston event.

“It’s time for everybody to get up from the kitchen table and say ‘Hands off,’” she said.
“Hands off our government, hands off our Constitution.”



A growing momentum of anti-Trump and anti-Musk sentiment spurred Saturday's protest, making Boston's turnout the largest in the city since Trump's inauguration in January. Unlike Trump's first term when public outcry hit a fever pitch, protests this time around have been fewer, smaller, and calmer — until recently.

On Saturday, between 25,000 and 30,000 people flowed from Boston Common to City Hall Plaza, according to estimates from the Boston Police Department. The sound of drums echoed through the air and people waved American, Ukrainian, and trans pride flags. Despite chilly April temperatures, many came from places outside the city. They flocked from Framingham, Franklin, Gloucester, Plymouth, and beyond, with homemade signs and umbrellas, prepared for a rainy afternoon.

Asked what brought her out, Laurie Irwin shouted, "Outrage."

"Who is going to work if everybody is fired from the government?" Irwin asked.

The attendees were students and teachers, union leaders and laborers, first-time protesters and veteran marchers. At least one person was costumed as George Washington, another was recovering from recent knee surgery. They brought their youngsters in backpacks and strollers. Some brought their pets.

"Tax the rich," they chanted. Reminiscent of the protest era of the 1960s, the sound of musicians strumming the folk anthem "This Land Is Your Land" wafted through the air.

Dave Creme and Kourtney Hachey, of Waltham, came with their two children — Rory, 9, and Teagan, 7. Creme held Teagan, who held a sign she had made that said, "Fund our schools so I can learn," on his shoulders.



Demonstrators gathered at Market Square in Portsmouth, N.H., on Saturday. STEVEN PORTER

“There is so much going on that you can feel helpless,” said Hachey, who works with children with autism. “It was also an opportunity for my children to learn to speak not just for themselves, but for others.”

Labor organizations turned out in force. Leaders from the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts took the stage.

“I’m here to say an immigrant is not the one taking jobs from people, a billionaire is,” said Chrissy Lynch, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.

Beth Lev, an organizer for the Massachusetts “Hands Off” rally, said this was one of thousands of demonstrations happening in all 50 states and six other countries: Canada, Mexico, England, France, Germany, and Portugal.

Saturday was predicted to be the largest single day of protest since Trump took office. The biggest rally was expected to happen on Washington's National Mall. Trump was not scheduled to be in the nation's capital but rather at his Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Fla.

Massachusetts Senator Edward J. Markey joined in the march down Tremont Street.

"I believe it's the people who lead, it's the people who tell Washington what's [happening]," the senator said.

At City Hall Plaza, Markey was the first of several official speakers. The finale, an acoustic set from Boston's beloved Irish punk band the Dropkick Murphys, came amid a downpour.



Ken Casey and Dropkick Murphys energized demonstrators during "Hands Off," an anti-Trump/Musk rally, at City Hall Plaza. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

Markey was greeted with energetic applause, whistles, and chants of "Markey!"

“This is the energy we need and Boston is going to ignite that energy across the nation,” Markey said. “We aren’t going to take it anymore.”

Markey also urged the crowd to come together to accomplish three essential things: block Trump in the courts, get out and vote, and “stand up like Senator Cory Booker,” who last week gave a record-breaking speech from the Senate floor.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu was emphatic in her denunciation of the Trump administration. She led the crowd in a “Hands off Boston” chant.

“This is about the world we want our children to grow up in,” Wu said. “This is our city and you will never break us.”

Boston mayoral hopeful Josh Kraft also joined the downtown march.

“I’m out here with all these people standing up to Donald Trump, the Trump administration, Elon Musk, DOGE,” Kraft told the Globe.

In Providence, about 8,000 people marched from Hope High School to Kennedy Plaza in downtown.

Wearing a hot pink pussy hat, Joyce Ward denounced a proposed \$510 million in funding cuts to Brown University as “ill-advised” and “retribution.”

“He’s saying he’s going after these colleges because of antisemitism. It’s not true. It’s just more gangster government,” said Ward, 71, of Providence.

Rhode Island state Representative Karen Alzate, who [previously told the Globe](#) how she had grown up in the shadow of deportation because her parents were undocumented, announced to the crowd that she is introducing a local bill that would tax the rich.

“The economy is for us. And we’re here to tell this administration that you will not continue to tax our money to use it for your game,” Alzate said. “You will not continue to deport my family, my friends, my neighbors.”

In Portsmouth, N.H., Paul L. Gilbert protested outside of a Tesla dealership showroom. His handheld sign said, “I didn’t vote for Musk!”

“Only Congress can dictate where funds are spent and not spent, and he’s overridden that,” Gilbert said, as passing motorists on Route 1 honked their horns in support. “It’s just frustrating that the Republicans don’t seem to be challenging that.”

Undeterred by rain in Concord, N.H., Heidi Preuss, a 64-year-old retiree, brought her 8-year-old Great Dane, Leila, along for the protest. Both sported homemade signs.

Preuss said she’s stressed out about the current state of the nation, from drops in the stock market to Trump’s immigration policies.

“Disappearing people off the street is just insane,” she said. “It is absolutely the most un-American thing. It’s the things that make us American that are being attacked.”

Retiree Ken Cowan, of Wilmot, N.H., a veteran and first-time protester, said, “I didn’t fight for our country for this.”

Cowan, 67, called Trump’s presidency “a coup in progress.”

“I think if we can all stand up and voice our opinions, he can’t take over this country,” Cowan added.

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