

Musk and Ramaswami have said that their DOGE project will cut the federal budget by eliminating unnecessary regulations and cutting regulatory agencies. Putting aside what “unnecessary” means here, that’s not even going to be a downpayment on the kind of budget cuts they’re seeking.

The numbers are pretty simple. Suppose they eliminated EPA entirely. That would be a \$10 billion saving. Sounds like a lot. But the Dogematic Duo talked about \$2 trillion in cuts, though they now seem to be waffling about the amount,. Abolishing EPA would get them only one half a percent of that goal, leaving only 99.5% to go. They’d have to abolish 200 EPA-sized agencies to reach the goal. Even if they scale back the \$2 trillion goal by two-thirds or three-quarters, abolishing EPA would make only a trivial contribution.

Ramaswamy says he’d cut 75% of the civilian workforce. The federal government has about two million civilian workers, so that would mean getting rid of about 1.5 million workers. EPA has around 19,000 workers, about 1.5% of the target. So you’d need to abolish sixty-seven EPAs to hit the layoff target.

And of course, abolishing EPA regulation isn’t feasible anyway. Not even Trump has been willing to come out and say that we should just give free rein to polluters. The public isn’t likely to support unlimited air pollution, water pollution, toxic chemicals releases, and drinking water contamination. And that’s not to mention the non-regulatory things EPA does like fund municipal water treatment.

Whatever else you can say about them, Musk and Ramaswamy are smart guys. They know these numbers. Their plan to get rid of regulation can’t really be about budget cuts, because they understand full well the budget savings would be minor. The point of getting rid of regulations isn’t saving federal dollars; the point of getting rid of regulations is to get rid of the regulations.

No doubt both of them think this would be greatly to the advantage of businesses like theirs and therefore necessarily a great public benefit, but it’s a completely different issues than budget-cutting. They may be right about deregulation or they may be wrong, but it’s going to do almost nothing to balance the budget.

I did a little research and learned that no one is quite sure how to pronounce “DOGE.” I’d propose pronouncing it as “dodge,” because it seems to me there’s a lot of dodging and weaving going on here.