

**No Free Ride for Elon Musk:  
Hold Tesla Accountable for its Failures in Buffalo**

January 8, 2026

**Summary and Call to Action**

New York State has invested over \$1 billion in Tesla's Buffalo factory. Tesla has failed to meet the hiring requirements, while engaging in union busting and mistreating its workers. Now Tesla is planning a supercomputer on the site that is likely to harm the environment and increase all of our electricity bills. New York has failed to penalize Tesla for violating its agreement; instead it is considering a lease extension that would make a bad deal even worse.

Write to Governor Hochul and Empire State Development, asking them to:

- Hold Elon Musk accountable! Enforce the current agreement and fine Tesla for failing to meet the job requirements.
- Don't sign a lease extension with Tesla unless it includes:
  - Labor protections, including card check certification, meaning that if a majority of workers sign cards supporting a union, Tesla must recognize the union;
  - Environmental protections, including a requirement that all electricity used on site be from solar or wind power sources.
  - Community benefits, including payments to the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Public Schools, and Erie County, to make up for the property taxes Tesla doesn't pay because the factory and property are owned by the State.

Governor Kathy Hochul  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224  
[518-474-8390](tel:518-474-8390)  
<https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

Karen Utz  
Regional Director  
Empire State Development  
95 Perry Street, Suite 500  
Buffalo, NY 14203-3030  
(716) 221-8316, 716-221-8316  
[wny@esd.ny.gov](mailto:wny@esd.ny.gov)

**Failed Project**

- The plan for the Buffalo factory—manufacturing a new type of solar roof module—has failed completely, and hundreds of workers have been laid off.
- Tesla uses a Chinese competitor's solar panels on its own factory roof.
- The original statewide target of 5,000 jobs has been reduced to 3,640, and Tesla failed to meet that target in 2024 and 2025.

**Workers' Rights**

- Workers have complained about racial harassment, sexual harassment, oppressive job conditions, and union-busting, including the firing of workers attempting to organize.

## **Environmental Harms**

- Tesla is planning to add a supercomputer to the site, which will use massive amounts of electricity, causing climate change damage and making electricity more expensive for residents and other businesses.
- Supercomputers consume huge amounts of potable water and discharge effluents, straining local water systems.

## **Community Harms**

- The Tesla plant has done nothing to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood.
- Local municipalities and school districts do not receive property tax revenue, because the state owns the land.

## **A Company Sliding Downhill**

- Tesla's car sales have been plummeting, as car buyers around the world reject the brand due to Elon Musk's behavior and safety problems with the vehicles.
- Tesla is staking its future on a self-driving technology that, because it relies solely on cameras, is considered highly risky.

## **Toxic Leadership**

- Elon Musk's behavior has grown unhinged, including apparently Fascist salutes at two public events.
- He has used his massive platform on X to spread lies and virulence; hate speech on X has grown dramatically since he took ownership.
- His role in the federal government with DOGE included illegal seizure of data, massive and abrupt layoffs, and the sudden and chaotic termination of medical and nutritional programs, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths around the world.

## **New York State's Failure to Hold Tesla Accountable**

- New York has not penalized Tesla for violating its agreement by failing to meet job targets.
- Tesla and New York have signed a nonbinding letter of intent that
  - Reduces the statewide job target from 3,640 to 3,000;
  - Reduces the maximum penalty for failing to meet job targets from \$41.2 million to \$10 million.

## **For More Information**

*The Tesla Plant in Buffalo: Time for a Fresh Start*, by Kevin Connor and Sam Magavern, a Partnership for the Public Good policy brief, available at <https://ppgbuffalo.org/buffalo-commons/library/resource:the-tesla-plant-in-buffalo-time-for-a-fresh-start/>.