



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on March 27, 2025

U.S. Robotics Firms Lobby Congress for National Robot Strategy

A group of leading U.S. robotics companies, including Tesla and Boston Dynamics, are calling on lawmakers to create a federal office dedicated to robotics and artificial intelligence. The companies argue that without a national strategy, the United States risks falling behind China in the next great technological race: intelligent robotics.

Push for Federal Policy

According to the [Associated Press](#), company leaders gathered on Capitol Hill to showcase their latest innovations and advocate for a coordinated government approach:

Representatives of companies — including Tesla, Boston Dynamics and Agility Robotics — on Wednesday met with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to show off products and push for the United States to [adopt policies](#) that would boost American companies in a global race to develop the next generation of robots.



AP Images
Tesla Optimus robot

“We’re leading in AI,” said Jeff Cardenas, CEO and co-founder of Austin-based startup Apptronik, after the closed-door meeting. “But we need a national strategy if we’re going to stay ahead.”

The Association for Advanced Automation added that robots represent the “physical manifestation” of AI. In a statement, the group warned:

Without leadership, the U.S. will not only lose the robotics race but also the AI race.

Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) echoed the concern. “China is devoting a lot of resources very quickly,” he said. “We need to maintain our innovation and entrepreneurship.”

The outlet noted that China is currently the biggest market for factory robots, with about 1.8 million in use in 2023, according to the Germany-based International Federation of Robotics (IFR).

Beijing is “positioning humanoid robots as a frontier technology,” reported AP. It said the country recently launched a \$138 billion state fund focused on robotics, AI, and related tech.

Tesla’s “Legion” of Robots

Tesla, the electric carmaker led by Elon Musk — sometimes dubbed the “co-president” of the United



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States for his [outsized influence](#) in the Trump administration — played a prominent role at the meeting. Tesla's humanoid robot program, Optimus, is aiming big. Built to look and move like a person, [Optimus](#) can handle tasks that are “dangerous, repetitive, and boring” for humans. The robot runs on Tesla's in-house AI and shares key components with the company's cars, including sensors and actuators.

During the Q1 2025 meeting last Thursday, [Musk said](#):

This year, we hopefully will be able to make about 5,000 Optimus robots.... But even 5,000 robots, that's the size of a Roman legion, FYI, which is like a little scary thought. Like a whole legion of robots, I'll be like “whoa!”

Musk further projected,

I think we will literally build a legion, at least one legion of robots this year, and then probably 10 legions next year.... So probably 50,000-ish next year.

Musk [indicated](#) back in 2022 that the Optimus bot could eventually become “more significant than the car business.”

Boston Dynamics: From Military to Civilian

Massachusetts-based Boston Dynamics, known for its agile, dog-like and humanoid robots, is also lobbying for federal support. Now owned by Hyundai, the company first gained attention through U.S. military research grants.

One of its best-known machines is [Spot](#), a nimble, quadruped robot built to navigate complex terrain. While the company's roots are for military use, it is now expanding into civilian applications. In 2024, Spot [was used](#) by at least two police departments to “gather valuable information to deescalate dangerous situations.” First responders have also used it to inspect hazardous areas without putting human lives at risk.

Spot's reach is growing. It's been deployed on construction sites to monitor progress and detect safety issues. In [energy plants](#), it checks infrastructure for faults. During the Covid pandemic, some [hospitals used Spot](#) to deliver supplies and even treat patients to reduce exposure for medical staff.

Spot's [real-world uses](#) can stretch from border control to disaster zones. It's been deployed to locate victims in collapsed buildings, detect chemical leaks, inspect suspicious packages, and assist in hostage situations. Spot can also monitor crowds at public events, map and assist in wildfires, and gather data after emergencies.

Boston Dynamics also builds [Atlas](#), a humanoid robot powered by AI and machine learning, designed for agility and coordination. It can run, jump, and handle objects in dynamic environments.

Boston Dynamics calls its products tools for [public safety](#). And while that may be true, some observers hope robots never end up becoming a public-safety concern themselves.

Agility Robotics: Bipedal Workers

Oregon-based [Agility Robotics](#) is taking a different approach. It is building bipedal robots such as [Digit](#) to work alongside humans in warehouses and distribution centers. Digit is already [being tested](#) by logistics companies such as Amazon.



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In June 2024, the company [signed](#) a multi-year agreement with GXO Logistics, marking the industry's first formal commercial deployment of humanoid robots. Digit has been deployed in GXO's logistics operations, assisting with tasks such as moving totes from collaborative robots to conveyors.

Agility's CEO Peggy Johnson [said](#) earlier this month that Digit fills labor gaps by handling repetitive, physically demanding tasks that often go unfilled. It runs on AI, using large language models such as Gemini and ChatGPT to learn new tasks and follow verbal commands.

The robot is offered as a subscription, letting companies start small and scale up. Long-term, Agility aims to bring Digit into homes as well.

Apptronik: Friendly Helpers

[Apptronik](#)'s CEO and co-founder, Jeff Cardenas, helped lead the push in Washington.

The company specializes in developing versatile humanoid robots designed to work alongside humans in various industries. Their flagship robot, [Apollo](#), is "the first commercial humanoid robot that was designed for friendly interaction, mass manufacturability, high payloads and safety." It [can perform](#) tasks such as material handling and assembly line support, aiming to enhance efficiency and address labor shortages in sectors such as manufacturing and logistics.

The company wants Congress to prioritize robotics the way China has so America can continue to "stay ahead" and build "some of the best robots in the world."

Before We Build the Legion

Robots can ease burdens, boost productivity, and expand what's possible — their potential is vast. But so are the risks. As corporations rally Congress — a body long steeped in influence and special interests — to build a national robotics strategy, we should pause.

Expanding the use of robots means more than upgrading tools. On the flipside of growing reliance on robots are displaced workers, deeper inequality, and power concentrated in fewer hands. Further, it invites surveillance into every corner of life and outsources moral judgment to machines. It risks blurring accountability, fraying social bonds, and tempting governments and corporations with the dream of tireless, obedient enforcers.

True, China races forward with state-backed robotics, largely unchecked by legal or moral considerations. That's why, in the race to outcompete Beijing, we must not abandon the very principles that set us apart. Speed and efficiency alone are not virtues. If central planning, mass surveillance, and top-down control — driven by the merging state and corporate elites — are the price of victory in this race, the cost is too high.

Our constitutional order rests on limited government, the sovereignty of states, the dignity of the individual, and the belief that power begins with the people. Innovation must serve liberty, not replace it. If we forget that, we may build machines that do everything — except stop us from becoming the very thing we set out to oppose.



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