

October 3, 2025
Hon. Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

Common Cause and I write to request that the Government Accountability Office investigate whether the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention violated federal appropriations law, including the Anti-Deficiency Act, by using government resources to publish partisan political messages during the September 30, 2025 government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the CDC's official website prominently displayed the following message (see Exhibit A):

The Trump Administration is working to reopen the government for the American people. Mission-critical activities of CDC will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown.

This banner was displayed on the CDC's official taxpayer-funded website, which serves as a critical public health resource accessed by millions of Americans seeking factual health information. Rather than providing neutral, factual information about the shutdown's impact on public health services, the message explicitly assigned partisan blame to "Democrat-led" actions while crediting the "Trump Administration."

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently held that purely partisan communications—those "completely devoid of any connection with official functions and completely political in nature"—constitute prohibited propaganda that agencies cannot fund with appropriations.

The CDC's message of a "Democratic-led government shutdown" served no legitimate public health purpose. It provided no information about which CDC programs would continue to operate, how the public could access essential services, or what health protections would remain in place. Instead, the message existed solely to assign political blame and credit along partisan lines.

Under GAO precedent, using appropriated funds for purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act because such expenditures exceed authorized appropriations. Any government resources, including employee time and government websites, used to create and disseminate purely partisan messages constitute unauthorized obligations of federal funds.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether CDC violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to publish and maintain partisan political messaging that served no official agency function. The American people deserve public health agencies that provide factual, nonpartisan information, particularly during national emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,
Omar H. Nouredin
Senior Vice President, Policy & Litigation
Common Cause

Exhibit A

