

October 3, 2025  
Ms. Juliet T. Hodgkins  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Inspector General

Dear Acting Inspector General Hodgkins:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a component of the Department of Health and Human Services. This complaint requests that the HHS Office of Inspector General investigate the CDC's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

### Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the CDC displayed partisan political messaging on its official taxpayer-funded website that served no legitimate public health purpose. Specifically, the CDC's homepage prominently featured the following banner message:

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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.

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This message was displayed at the top of the CDC's official website ([cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)), which serves as a critical public health resource accessed by millions of Americans seeking factual health information. Rather than providing neutral information about which CDC programs would continue operating during the shutdown or how the public could access essential health services, the message served purely partisan political purposes.

### Legal Violation

The Anti-Lobbying Act, codified at 18 U.S.C. § 1913, prohibits federal agencies from using appropriated funds for activities designed to influence members of Congress or to encourage the public to contact Congress about pending legislation. The statute specifically provides:

No part of the money appropriated by any enactment of Congress shall, in the absence of express authorization by Congress, be used directly or indirectly to pay for any personal service, advertisement, telegram, telephone, letter, printed or written matter, or other device, intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, a jurisdiction, or an official of any government, to favor, adopt, or oppose, by vote or otherwise, any legislation, law, rule, regulation, policy, or appropriation.

The CDC's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the official CDC website, federal employee time, and taxpayer-funded web infrastructure—to advance political positions that served no official agency function.

## Specific Violations

The CDC's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging: The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the CDC website required the use of federal employee time, government web servers, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. Grassroots Lobbying Activity: By assigning partisan blame for the government shutdown to "Democrat-led" actions while crediting the "Trump Administration," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about agency operations.
3. Exceeding Authorized Appropriations: The CDC has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the agency's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

## Responsible Officials

Jim O'Neil, Acting Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the CDC's official website. As the senior official overseeing the agency, he would have authority over and responsibility for ensuring that CDC communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

## Evidence

I have attached a screenshot of the CDC's official website, which shows the partisan political message that was prominently displayed during the government shutdown. This evidence demonstrates the violation and shows the specific language used.

## Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the HHS Office of Inspector General conduct a thorough investigation into this apparent violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act, including:


- Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the CDC website;
- Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
- Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
- Reviewing CDC policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
- Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions, not partisan political messaging.

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




Exhibit A

 An official website of the United States government. [Here's how you know](#) ▼

[Español](#)

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.





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