

October 17, 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 Department of Homeland Security violated federal appropriations law, including the Anti-Deficiency Act, by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025 government shutdown – specifically the release by Secretary Kristi Noem of a partisan video message to be played in airports across the country. This complaint follows on Common Cause’s October 3 complaint regarding partisan email and website messages produced by DHS in recent weeks.

Background

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the DHS released a partisan [video](#), to be played in airports across the country, that uses blatantly partisan language. The video blames Democrats for air travel delays during the government shutdown, and states, in part: “...Democrats in Congress refuse to fund the government. And because of this, many of our operations are impacted and most of our TSA employees are working without pay. We will continue to do all that we can to avoid delays that will impact your travel. And our hope is that Democrats will soon recognize the importance of opening the government.”

These explicitly partisan political statements served no legitimate homeland security purpose. The video was presumably developed and distributed through taxpayer-funded DHS systems, using government resources, and then broadcast to a captive audience waiting in line at airports.

The partisan content has been displayed in airports since October 10, 2025 and continues to be shown. Notably, many airports have refused to show the video, due to concern about the video’s legality and its impact in making airports less welcoming to passengers and employees with varying political perspectives.

The DHS video was posted on social media by the White House on October 10, 2025 (<https://x.com/RapidResponse47/status/1976668787467514316>).



Legal Analysis

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 their appropriations.

The DHS airport video message exemplifies partisan communications, and serves no legitimate operational purpose related to homeland security functions. Rather than informing employees about which essential functions would continue or informing passengers about how to access necessary services, the messages existed solely to advance partisan talking points and assign political blame for the shutdown.

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 DHS violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging, including DHS Secretary Noem's recent video, which served no official agency purpose. This investigation should examine the authorization, approval, and distribution of these communications to determine what government resources were improperly used for partisan political purposes.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

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

