

October 17, 2025

Mr. Joseph V. Cuffari
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General/MAIL STOP 0305
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Inspector General Cuffari:

I am writing to formally complain about a violation of the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913) by officials at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This complaint requests that the DHS Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging – 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 and Factual Allegations

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, potentially thousands of times per day at each TSA security entrance. 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.

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 DHS partisan messaging appears to have violated this prohibition by using government resources—including official DHS audiovisual systems, federal employee time, and taxpayer-funded communication infrastructure—to advance political positions that served no official security function. We believe DHS is also violating the Anti-Lobbying Act each time the video is shown, in some cases on TSA-owned monitors, potentially resulting in thousands of violations as travelers across the country are subjected to partisan propaganda.

Specific Violations

The DHS actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

- **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through DHS audiovisual systems required the use of federal employee time, government communication systems, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
- **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Democrats in Congress" for refusing to fund the government, the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about DHS operations.
- **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** DHS has no congressional authorization to use appropriated funds for partisan political communications. Such expenditures exceed the Department's authorized appropriations and constitute improper obligations of federal funds.

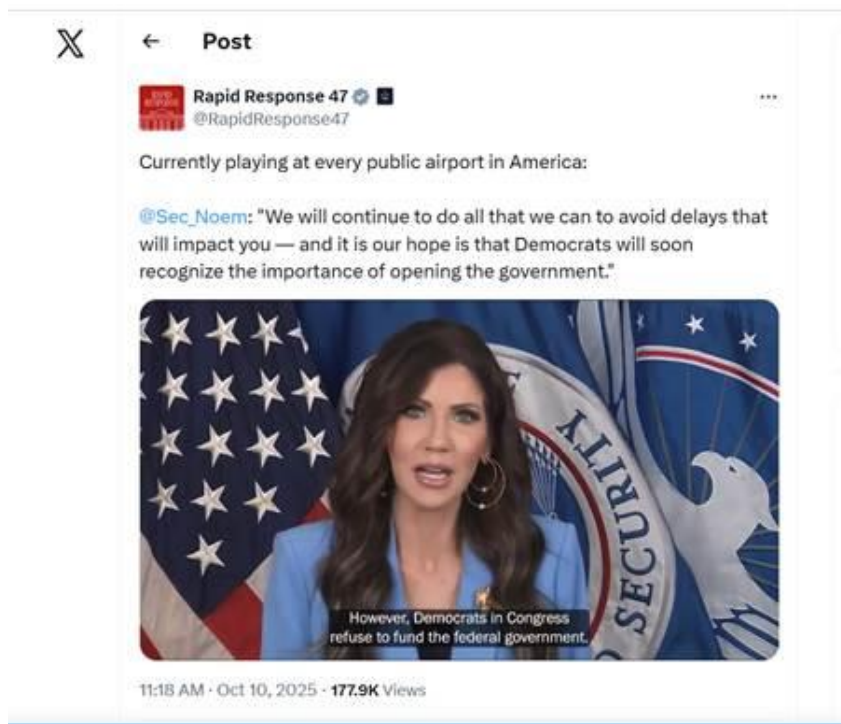
Responsible Officials

Secretary Kristi Noem bears responsibility for recording the video and overseeing its distribution through official DHS communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, she has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that DHS communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

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





Request for Investigation

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

Determining who authorized the creation and distribution of the partisan political messaging through DHS audiovisual and communication systems;

1. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
2. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
3. Reviewing DHS policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
4. 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 that undermines the Department's homeland security mission.

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

Exhibits

- Screenshot of DHS video posted on social media by the White House on October 10, 2025



- The Washington Post, *Airports say they won't air Kristi Noem shutdown video at TSA checkpoints*, (October 13, 2025): <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2025/10/13/kristi-noem-shutdown-video/>

