

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 Department of Homeland Security violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the government shutdown on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, DHS sent agency-wide emails to federal employees containing explicitly partisan statements about the shutdown. According to news reports, these official communications stated:

President Trump opposes a government shutdown and strongly supports enactment of H.R. 5371, which is a clean Continuing Resolution to fund the government through November 21, and already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands. If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution to keep the government funded before midnight on September 30, 2025, federal appropriated funding will lapse.

The emails further referenced "any lapse in appropriations forced by Congressional Democrats" and claimed that "Congressional Democrats are blocking" passage of continuing resolution legislation.

These communications were distributed through official DHS email systems using taxpayer-funded government resources to advance partisan political positions rather than provide neutral information about agency operations during the shutdown.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. Communications that serve purely partisan purposes—explicitly blaming one political party while praising another—constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

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

Using government email systems and employee time to create and distribute purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating federal funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed appropriated authority.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether DHS violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging that 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

