

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 the Interior violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political communications during the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of the Interior distributed official communications to DOI staff that contained explicitly partisan messaging about the shutdown. According to reports, these official department messages stated that **"ANY LAPSE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING WOULD BE FORCED BY CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS"** and described Democrats as blocking a clean continuing resolution to pursue unrelated policy demands.

These partisan statements were communicated through official DOI channels and government systems, using taxpayer resources to advance political messaging that assigned blame to one political party while defending the Trump Administration's position on the shutdown.

Rather than providing neutral information about which Interior Department functions would continue during the shutdown or how the public could access essential services, these communications served purely partisan purposes, explicitly blaming Congressional Democrats for the appropriations lapse while promoting the Administration's legislative priorities.

Legal Analysis

Federal agencies are prohibited from using appropriated funds for "publicity or propaganda purposes" under annual appropriations acts. GAO has consistently determined that communications serving purely partisan political purposes constitute prohibited propaganda when funded with government resources.

The Interior Department's partisan messaging violated these restrictions by using official government communication systems, employee time, and other federal resources to disseminate political statements that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's mission of managing America's natural resources and cultural heritage.

Using government resources to distribute purely partisan communications violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the agency's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of the Interior violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization, creation, and distribution of these communications to determine what federal resources were improperly used for partisan political purposes.

The American people deserve federal agencies that use taxpayer resources for legitimate government functions, not partisan political messaging.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

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

