

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 Labor violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Labor implemented partisan political messaging in official out-of-office email auto-replies sent from DOL employee accounts. Instead of using standard neutral shutdown language, the Department—under Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer's leadership—replaced neutral communications with explicitly partisan messaging.

According to widespread news report, Department-mandated auto-reply message stated:

Due to Democrat Senators blocking passage of H.R. 5371 in the Senate, appropriations have lapsed and I am currently in furlough status. I will respond to emails once government functions resume.

This partisan message was automatically distributed from hundreds of DOL employee email accounts, including both furloughed and essential employees, using the Department's official email infrastructure. Rather than providing neutral information about the shutdown's impact on Labor Department services, the messages served purely partisan purposes by assigning blame to "Democrat Senators" while promoting specific House legislation. The Department of Labor's email systems serve critical functions related to workplace safety, employment rights, and worker protections. Using these taxpayer-funded communication platforms for partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for partisan political activity.

Legal Analysis

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

The Labor Department's implementation of partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official email systems, government servers, and employee time to create and distribute

political statements that served no legitimate operational purpose related to the Department's mission of protecting American workers.

Using government resources to automatically distribute partisan political messaging from hundreds of employee email accounts violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Labor violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, implement, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan auto-reply messages and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than operational purposes.

The Department of Labor should focus on protecting American workers and enforcing labor laws, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

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

