

October 3, 2025
Mr. Arne B. Baker
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of State
Office of Inspector General
1700 North Moore Street (SA-39)
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Acting Inspector General Baker:

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 State. This complaint requests that the DOS Office of Inspector General investigate the Department's use of appropriated federal funds to disseminate partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that commenced on September 30, 2025, the Department of State—under Secretary Marco Rubio's leadership—displayed a prominent red banner across the top of its official website that served no legitimate diplomatic purpose. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity. The banner read:

Federal Government Shutdown. Due to the Democrat-led shutdown, website updates will be limited until full operations resume.

This partisan message was prominently featured on the State Department's homepage, using the Department's taxpayer-funded official website to assign political blame to one party for the appropriations lapse. Rather than providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected diplomatic services, consular operations, or emergency assistance for American citizens abroad, the banner existed solely to advance partisan political messaging.

The State Department's website serves as a critical resource for Americans traveling abroad, foreign nationals seeking visa information, and diplomatic partners worldwide. Using this official platform to disseminate partisan political statements undermines the Department's diplomatic mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of government resources for political purposes.

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 State Department's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no official diplomatic function.

Specific Violations

The State Department's actions violated the Anti-Lobbying Act in the following ways:

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and display of partisan political content on the State Department website required the use of federal employee time, government web infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly stating the shutdown was "Democrat-led," the message was designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about State Department operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The State Department 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 Marco Rubio bears ultimate responsibility for the content published on the Department of State's official website. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over, and responsibility for, ensuring that State Department communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging displayed on the State Department website.

Request for Investigation

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

1. Determining who authorized the creation and publication of the partisan political messaging on the State Department website;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and maintain this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing State Department policies and procedures to determine how such violations occurred; and
5. Recommending appropriate remedial actions and disciplinary measures.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter. The American people deserve a Department of State that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate diplomatic functions—conducting American foreign policy and serving



Americans abroad—not partisan political messaging that undermines the Department's mission and America's diplomatic standing.

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

Exhibit A

