

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 U.S. Department of the Treasury violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to display partisan political messaging during the September 30, 2025, government shutdown.

Background

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury—under Secretary Scott Bessent's leadership—displayed explicitly partisan messaging on its official website. Instead of providing neutral information about how the shutdown affected Treasury operations or economic services, the Department's homepage prominently featured the following message:

The radical left has chosen to shut down the United States government in the name of reckless spending and obstructionism. As a result, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's websites will only be sporadically updated until this shutdown concludes.

This partisan statement was displayed on the Treasury's official taxpayer-funded website, using federal resources to assign political blame to the "radical left" for the appropriations lapse. Rather than informing the public about which Treasury functions would continue during the shutdown or how citizens could access essential financial services, the message served purely partisan political purposes by disparaging one political party while promoting the Administration's narrative about "reckless spending and obstructionism."

Additionally, according to widespread news reporting, Treasury distributed similar partisan messaging internally to employees, framing the shutdown as solely the fault of Democrats and the "radical left" through official government communication channels.

The Treasury Department's website serves as a vital resource for Americans and international partners seeking information on economic policy, financial sanctions, tax guidance, and other key Treasury functions. Using this official platform to disseminate inflammatory partisan political messaging undermines the Department's economic mission and violates federal restrictions on using government resources for political purposes.

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 Treasury Department's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official website infrastructure, government web servers, email systems, and employee time to create and display political statements that served no legitimate economic purpose related to the Department's mission of maintaining a strong economy and creating economic opportunity.

Using government resources to display inflammatory partisan political messaging on official agency platforms violates the Anti-Deficiency Act by obligating appropriated funds for unauthorized purposes that exceed the Department's appropriated authority for legitimate operational communications about Treasury services.

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the U.S. Department of the Treasury violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and display partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of both the website messaging and internal employee communications, and determine what federal resources were used for political rather than economic policy purposes.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury should focus on maintaining economic stability and serving the American people, not advancing partisan political messaging at taxpayer expense.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

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

Exhibit A

