

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 Veterans Affairs 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 began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs—under Secretary Douglas Collins' leadership—used official taxpayer-funded communication channels to distribute explicitly partisan political statements that assigned blame to one political party for the appropriations lapse.

According to news reports, the VA distributed a weekly newsletter to veterans containing partisan messaging that blamed "Senate Democrats for the federal shutdown," stating they were blocking a stopgap bill to fund the government "due to unrelated policy demands." The newsletter then proceeded to list disruptions to veterans' services and resources, attributing these disruptions to Democrats.

These partisan communications were disseminated through official VA email newsletters, utilizing government resources and infrastructure to reach veterans, VA staff, and the general public. Rather than providing neutral information about which VA services would continue during the shutdown or how veterans could access available benefits and care, the messaging served purely partisan purposes by disparaging one political party while implicitly supporting another.

The Department of Veterans Affairs serves millions of American veterans who depend on VA services for healthcare, disability benefits, education assistance, and other critical support. Using official VA communications to advance partisan political messaging undermines the Department's mission and violates federal restrictions on the use of 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 VA's partisan shutdown messaging violated these restrictions by using the Department's official newsletter system, government email infrastructure, and employee time to create and distribute political statements that served no legitimate veterans services purpose related to the Department's mission of caring for those who have served our nation.

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

Request for Investigation

We respectfully request that GAO investigate whether the Department of Veterans Affairs violated federal appropriations law by using government resources to create, authorize, and distribute partisan political messaging during the government shutdown. This investigation should examine the authorization and implementation of these partisan newsletter communications and determine what federal resources were used for political purposes rather than for veterans' services.

The Department of Veterans Affairs should focus on serving the veterans who have sacrificed for our nation, 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

