

October 3, 2025
Ms. Cheryl L. Mason
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Inspector General Mason:

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

Background and Factual Allegations

During the government shutdown that began on September 30, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs—under the leadership of Secretary Douglas Collins—used official taxpayer-funded communication channels to distribute explicitly partisan political statements that served no legitimate purpose in veterans' services. These communications violated federal restrictions on using government resources for partisan political activity.

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 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 VA's partisan messaging violated this prohibition by using government resources—including the Department's official newsletter system, government email infrastructure, and federal employee time—to advance political positions that served no legitimate veterans services function.

Specific Violations

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

1. **Use of Appropriated Funds for Political Messaging:** The creation, approval, and distribution of partisan political content through VA newsletters required the use of federal employee time, government email infrastructure, and other taxpayer-funded resources in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1913.
2. **Grassroots Lobbying Activity:** By explicitly blaming "Senate Democrats" for blocking a stopgap funding bill due to "unrelated policy demands," the messages were designed to influence public opinion about political matters rather than provide neutral information about VA operations during the shutdown.
3. **Exceeding Authorized Appropriations:** The VA 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 Douglas Collins bears ultimate responsibility for the content published through official VA communication systems. As the senior official overseeing the Department, he has authority over and responsibility for ensuring that VA communications comply with federal law, including the Anti-Lobbying Act.

Evidence

I have attached supporting documentation that details the partisan political messaging distributed through official VA newsletters.

Request for Investigation

I respectfully request that the VA 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 distribution of the partisan political messaging through VA newsletters;
2. Identifying what federal resources were used to create, approve, and distribute this content;
3. Calculating the cost to taxpayers of the government resources used for partisan political purposes;
4. Reviewing VA 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 Veterans Affairs that uses taxpayer resources for legitimate veterans services functions—caring for those who served our nation with honor—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

Exhibit A

WFTV9, *The blame game is on at federal agencies, where political messages fault Democrats for the shutdown*, (October 2, 2025): <https://www.wftv.com/news/politics/blame-game-is/UJHCVNKOJAZ6BLSUULE2Z5CYKI/>

