

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

October 6, 2026

The Honorable Orice W. Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

The Honorable Charles Baldis
Special Counsel
U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

Re: Urgent demand for investigation of taxpayer-funded partisan advertising

Acting Comptroller General Brown and Special Counsel Baldis:

I write to demand an immediate investigation into whether the Trump Administration has diverted federal funds appropriated by Congress to finance political advertising featuring President Donald Trump in the weeks before the 2026 midterm elections.

Americans watching football games and weekend news programming have been confronted with advertisements bearing the disclosure, "Paid for by the U.S. Government." These are not recognizable public-service announcements. They are political hype videos: images of President Trump set to emotionally loaded music, rhetoric about defeating "communism, socialism, and Marxism," and recycled campaign-style attacks on the "deep state," "globalists," and the "fake news media." One spot reportedly repurposes material from Trump's 2024 presidential campaign.

The White House's claim that these ads are apolitical because the President is not technically a candidate collapses in light of Trump's own call for voters to "pretend" that he is on the November ballot. Taxpayer dollars cannot be used to turn that political instruction into a federally funded campaign ad. There is a basic principle at stake: **the government is not the President's campaign committee, and the Treasury is not his campaign account.** The federal government has no legitimate business billing the public for campaign messaging that a candidate's political committee should pay for.

In the closing weeks of a midterm election, these productions appear to function as taxpayer-funded efforts to strengthen the President's party, regardless of the label the White House attaches to them. When federal employees use official resources to broadcast attacks framed in the President's familiar campaign language, at the very moment candidates of his party are seeking office, the public is entitled to more than a White House label calling the ads "public service announcements."

GAO should determine the precise source of every dollar used to conceive, produce, purchase, place, distribute, and promote these advertisements, including any funds shifted among agencies or accounts. GAO should identify the authorizing officials, contractors, and agencies involved; determine the total cost, including television placements and official social-media distribution. GAO should then conclude whether those expenditures were authorized by Congress and consistent with the purposes and restrictions governing the accounts from which the money was drawn.

The reported conduct appears to warrant scrutiny under the prohibition on using appropriated funds for unauthorized publicity or propaganda and other appropriations laws. If an agency used funds appropriated for a defined governmental program to purchase communications whose predominant purpose was to burnish the President's political standing, GAO should determine whether that expenditure complied with the appropriation's authorized purpose and the relevant funding restrictions. For example, if funds appropriated for border security or law-enforcement activities were redirected to finance political communications, the Administration must identify the statutory authority permitting that use.¹ Taxpayer money must be spent for the purposes Congress specified, not for presidential vanity projects or thinly veiled electioneering.

OSC should separately examine the conduct of federal employees involved in creating, approving, procuring, disseminating, or promoting the advertisements. The relevant question is whether covered employees used their official positions, government resources, or official communications infrastructure for activity directed toward the electoral interests of a party or candidates. OSC should obtain the records necessary to answer that question, including directives, approvals, procurement documents, contracts, scripts, internal communications, and distribution plans, and pursue appropriate action if the evidence establishes a violation.

This is about more than a set of advertisements. It is about whether the federal government remains accountable to the people or can be converted into a propaganda apparatus for whoever occupies the Oval Office. In a democracy, citizens should never be compelled to finance political messaging designed to elevate an incumbent and demonize opponents. The line between public information and partisan propaganda exists for a reason. These advertisements did not test that boundary, they treated it as nonexistent, converting government communications into taxpayer-financed political promotion.

I urge GAO and OSC to open investigations immediately, preserve relevant records, provide a public accounting of the funds and personnel involved, and take all appropriate action under law.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

¹ Lisa Mascaro & Ali Swenson, *Homeland Security spending \$20M in taxpayer funds for pro-Trump ads*, AP (Sept. 29, 2026, 3:04 P.M.), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-ads-taxpayer-money-homeland-security-b869294503c8454db4109ae175ee9e5c>.