

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Secretary Mullin,

It has come to our attention that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may be using Americans' hard-earned tax dollars to bankroll the obscene political ads celebrating President Trump that have aired on stations nationwide in recent days.¹ We should not have to remind you that using government funding to create or air political ads like the ones that have been running over the last few days is illegal and a shockingly corrupt misuse of taxpayer dollars.²

It's hard to imagine a more damning split screen: while President Trump illegally cuts funding for lifesaving health research,³ he is also illegally using Americans' tax dollars to fund government propaganda and to put ads from his 2024 campaign back on the air. So far, it appears DHS has dedicated \$20 million to this outrageous scheme, tapping funds provided to U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Republicans' "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" for commemorative events relating to border security.⁴ Ad-Impact estimates that over \$1.7 million in federal funds have already been spent simply airing these ads.⁵

This administration's defense of using Americans' tax dollars to air these ads is as absurd as it is offensive. The White House has failed to answer our most basic questions about where these funds are

¹ Wagner, Bayliss. "Trump's 2024 'Final Battle' Ad Returns, Funded by Public Money." *New York Times*, 27 Sept. 2026, www.nytimes.com/2026/09/27/us/politics/trump-ad-government-campaign.html.

² United States Senate Committee on Appropriations. "Top appropriators demand White House immediately take taxpayer-funded ad celebrating Trump off the air." *United States Senate Committee on Appropriations Minority News Release*, 24 Sept. 2026, www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/minority/top-appropriators-demand-white-house-immediately-take-taxpayer-funded-ad-celebrating-trump-off-the-air.

³ Scholtes, Jennifer, and Katherine Tully-McManus. "Trump cancels \$1B in federal spending in latest challenge to Congress." *Politico*, 25 Sept. 2026, www.politico.com/news/2026/09/25/trump-declares-1b-canceled-in-pocket-rescission-in-another-affront-to-congress-funding-power-01093960.

⁴ On September 19, the Office of Management and Budget approved the release of a new tranche of funding to U.S. Customs and Border Protection via an apportionment. The new tranche of funding, which was originally provided by Republicans in the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," included \$20 million in new funding under the line item "Commemorative Events,"⁵ which we suspect may well be the funding tapped to run this government propaganda. See: https://openomb.org/file/11559134#tafs_11559134--070-0530-2025-2029--10--2026.

⁵ Shannon, Megan, et al. "White House releases new taxpayer-funded ad describing 'final battle'." *NBC News*, 27 Sept. 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/white-house-releases-new-taxpayer-funded-ad-describing-final-battle-rcna600171>.

coming from and who is responsible, but the principle here is very straightforward: as one Republican senator put it: “you can’t spend public money to promote yourself.”⁶

The American people deserve answers about how this president is literally stealing their tax dollars to air campaign ads celebrating himself—while doing nothing to help them afford health care or housing. These ads need to immediately come off the air, taxpayers need to be paid back for this theft, and everyone responsible needs to be held accountable for this corrupt and illegal propaganda.

To better understand the role DHS has played in facilitating the airing of these ads, please respond to the following questions within 48 hours:

1. Have any funds appropriated for DHS been used to produce, air, or otherwise promote these ads?
 - a. Please provide an exact breakdown of which funds have been tapped and the amount of taxpayer dollars used.
 - b. Does DHS plan to use additional federal funds to create new ads or continue airing these ads?
2. Has DHS contracted with any third parties to create or air these, or any related or forthcoming ads?
 - a. If so, please share copies of each contract DHS has entered into.
3. Who directed the misuse of taxpayer dollars for this purpose? Has anyone in the White House or the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed you to air these ads?
4. Have you spoken to the president about this?
5. Has any General Counsel at DHS, another Federal Department, the White House, or OMB reviewed and provided a legal opinion on the use of DHS funding for these ads?
6. Were any federal ethics officials consulted prior to the use of such funds for political ads?

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate



Christopher S. Murphy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

⁶ Mackey, Robert. “Republican senator criticizes White House for taxpayer-funded Trump ads.” *The Guardian*, 27 Sept. 2026, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/sep/27/john-kennedy-white-house-trump-ad-tax-money.

cc: Joseph V. Cuffari
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