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Sept. 29, 2026

Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street NE  
Washington, DC 20554

Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

**RE: Complaint Against Broadcasters Airing President Donald Trump's  
Campaign Commercials Paid for by Taxpayer Dollars**

Public Citizen urges the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and broadcasters individually, to end airing recent campaign commercials by President Trump and the White House that appear to be in breach of federal law. At least three campaign ads, paid for by taxpayer dollars, appear to violate the federal law against using taxpayer funds to finance propaganda (5 U.S.C. §3107) and related provisions of the appropriations laws as well as the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. §7324).

Under federal communications law, broadcast stations are strictly prohibited from censoring or rejecting ads sponsored by **legally qualified political candidates**. Even if a candidate's ad contains graphic imagery or disputed claims, stations generally must air it. But there are clear exceptions to this rule.

Broadcasters may be held liable for airing any advertisement that is in violation of federal law. Federal law explicitly prohibits using appropriated public funds for government propaganda, self-aggrandizement, or partisan political advertising. Yet, that is exactly the nature of Trump's recent campaign ads that began airing on September 23, 2026. Furthermore, Donald Trump is not a candidate for any elective office. The FCC and broadcasters are not constrained by the special rule protecting candidate advertisements.

Although the White House contends these ads are "public service announcements," and therefore may be paid for with taxpayer dollars, none of these three ads meet the standard of a public service announcement. They do not refer to any specific governmental program and they do not serve the purpose of informing the public about any specific governmental program. Instead, the ads are designed to boost the image and character of Donald Trump right before the 2026 midterm elections, and by association to benefit the president's political party in the upcoming election

The most recent of these taxpayer-funded campaign ads, entitled “The Final Battle,” is a copied version of an ad that the Trump campaign committee issued in the 2024 election. In dead serious black-and-white footage, Trump is seen marching down a corridor with a stern look, while the audio blares: “This is the final battle. With you at my side, we will demolish the deep state. We will expel the warmongers from our government.” A notice at the bottom of the screen announces: “Paid for by the U.S. government.” The advertisement was seen on *Saturday Night Live*, *Fox News Sunday* and several college and NFL football games this weekend. Spending on the latest ad already topped about \$319,000. The cost figure for all three campaign ads is estimated in excess of \$1 million.

An earlier [30-second spot](#) that began airing on September 23, 2026, features clips of Trump talking about defeating communism interspersed with onscreen text promoting the “largest tax cuts in history,” “reigniting American manufacturing” and a call to “defend law and order and police.” It says nothing about a specific government program.

Like the other previous two campaign advertisements Trump and the White House are billing to taxpayers, these ads are designed to boost the character of Donald Trump, generally are void of any legitimate government purpose, target the voting public shortly before the 2026 midterm elections, and thus appear to constitute violations of the law against using government resources for propaganda purposes as well as the Hatch Act.

Under the [Communications Act of 1934](#), broadcast television stations are granted localized spectrum licenses by the [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#) on the condition that they operate in the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.” A station knowingly broadcasting illegal, taxpayer-funded partisan propaganda has failed its public interest mandate, forming the basis of a formal **license renewal challenge**.

### **Conclusion: Stop Airing Illegal Campaign Ads**

Public Citizen strongly urges the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission to direct broadcasters to stop broadcasting these apparently illegal campaign advertisements and call on individual broadcasters to cease airing the campaign advertisements. It is the greater responsibility of both the FCC/FTC and individual broadcasters to keep the airwaves fair and honest and operate in the “public interest, convenience, and necessity.”

Sincerely,

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