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Submitted electronically

Trump Dipping into the Public Dole to Pay for Campaign Ads

“This is legal – in banana republics.” – Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY)

This is getting out of control, while the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) slowly ponders whether to take action. Taxpayers are now footing three separate campaign ads by President Donald Trump and his White House staff airing on TV networks across the nation. The latest taxpayer-funded campaign ad dominated the airwaves of football games over last weekend.

This campaign ad by Trump is every bit as brazen a violation of 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). Entitled “Final Battle,” the ad doesn’t even mention a pending government action. It simply tries to stir up hysteria among voters and depicts Trump as a great hero working to save the nation from grave threats.

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. It is [almost identical](#) to a 2024 campaign ad paid for by Trump’s campaign committees, except this one is paid for by taxpayers.

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 void of any legitimate government purpose, target the voting public shortly before the 2026 midterm

elections, and constitute violations of the law against using government resources for propaganda purposes and the Hatch Act.

Public Citizen filed a complaint on September 25, 2026, with the Government Accountability Office and the Office of Special Counsel following the first taxpayer-funded ad that appears to violate the laws against using government funds for propaganda and violations of the Hatch Act for the conduct of partisan political activity by the White House staff.

So, Public Citizen is once again writing your offices requesting an investigation into who produced these ads and at what cost to taxpayers, and to take appropriate remedial actions to enforce 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).

These ads are campaign advertisements, which should be produced and distributed on campaign time and without involving taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX

New York Times

https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/27/us/politics/trump-ad-government-campaign.html?unlocked_article_code=1.EVE.gMqi.-dnxNkdquOXY&smid=nytcore-ios-share

A Trump 2024 Campaign Ad Returns, Now Brought to You by the Government

The ad, which ethics experts said could violate federal law, shows Mr. Trump vowing to “expel the warmongers” from the government and fight the “deep state,” even as he wages a war with Iran.

“Cast out the Communists, Marxists and fascists.”

An ad nearly identical to one President Trump ran during his 2024 campaign returned on Saturday and was paid for using public money. Several ethics lawyers said it could violate federal law.



By [Bayliss Wagner](#)

Sept. 27, 2026

As President Trump ran to return to the White House in 2024, his campaign released a somber, black-and-white ad in which he railed against the “deep state” and vowed to expel “warmongers” from government.

“This is the final battle,” Mr. Trump is heard saying in the [online ad](#), which shows him walking silently down a hallway.

That ad [has returned](#) this weekend, airing on television stations across the country, with one notable difference: As it ends, the words “Paid for by the U.S. Government” appear on the screen.

The spot is the latest in a [series of pro-Trump ads](#) funded by public money. Some ethics experts have argued that the Trump administration is violating federal laws banning the use of taxpayer dollars for propaganda, and the ads have drawn criticism from both parties. The most recent ad, one expert argued, is a more flagrant violation given its prior use in the political arena.

“The president and his administration have gone from breaking the law to trampling it,” said Norm Eisen, a former White House special counsel for ethics and government reform under Barack Obama, who has sued the Trump administration several times. “The prior ad was bad enough, but this one openly repurposes prior political conduct.”

The ad aired during “Fox News Sunday,” “Saturday Night Live” and several college and NFL football games this weekend, including the Seattle Seahawks versus Washington Commanders contest and the Ohio State-Illinois matchup, according to data from the ad-analytics firm AdImpact.

The White House has defended the ads, saying in a statement it reissued Sunday that the spots are “public service announcements” that are “reminding Americans to love their country and understand what makes it worth defending, at home, at our borders, and abroad.” The White House said that there was no “call to action” in the ads.

But Richard Painter, a former White House ethics lawyer under George W. Bush, said the use of federal funds for the ads could be an “abuse of power” and “an impeachable offense.” He urged Congress to demand a reimbursement for the spending.

“This is very dangerous,” Mr. Painter, a law professor at the University of Minnesota, said in a phone interview on Sunday. “We do not allow government-sponsored propaganda in the United States.”

Three pro-Trump ads that say they are funded by the government have run in recent days, according to AdImpact. While it is not clear how much the government is spending to air the ads, the figure appears to be more than \$1 million, according to an AdImpact modeled estimate based on media markets where the ads were spotted on the airwaves.

The [initial ad](#), which debuted last week, showed the president vowing to defeat “socialism and communism and Marxism” as a montage plays. The ad, which is set to the song “Love Me,” was first [posted on the White House YouTube channel](#) two weeks ago. A [second ad](#) features quotes and clips from his July 4 speech at Mount Rushmore.

The latest ad appears to be backed by over \$70,000, according to AdImpact’s modeled estimate. The audio resembles remarks Mr. Trump made at several different campaign events across the country in 2023 and 2024.

The current ad re-promotes Mr. Trump’s 2024 campaign promise to “expel the warmongers from our government,” at a moment when his administration continues a war against Iran, which has no clear resolution in sight.

The ads come in the run-up to the November midterm elections. Mr. Trump’s low approval ratings and a war that has driven up prices threaten to hurt Republicans’ chances of holding their congressional majorities.

Democrats and some Republicans have expressed concern about the ads. Senator John Kennedy, Republican of Louisiana, said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that no public official, including Mr. Trump, “should spend public money on private ads for themselves.”

“The White House sees it differently,” Mr. Kennedy said in an interview on CBS News’s “Face the Nation.”

In addition to federal appropriations laws, some ethics experts said the ads might go against the Hatch Act, passed in 1939, which bars government employees from making political statements in their official capacity. The president is exempt from the Hatch Act, but if government employees worked on the ads or their placement, they could have run afoul of the law, the experts said.

“A divisive campaign commercial paid for by the U.S. government defies the Hatch Act’s very purpose,” said Margaret Dylus-Yukins, senior legal counsel for ethics at the Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan watchdog group.

Mr. Trump’s campaign spent an estimated \$60,000 to boost the original version of the latest ad online between Oct. 18, 2024, and Nov. 2, 2024, according to AdImpact.

The White House website has [a page](#) dedicated to defending the new ads. The page lists examples of what it calls “public service announcements” funded by past administrations, including pro-war messages under Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Ads from the George W. Bush administration about a Medicare law and the dangers of drug use, and the Biden administration’s campaign to encourage COVID-19 vaccination, are also cited.

The defense is a weak one, Mr. Painter said. In 2004, the General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress now called the [Government Accountability Office](#), [found the Bush administration violated a federal appropriations law](#) against propaganda because its ads portrayed the Medicare law as a boon to the elderly.

“They really shouldn’t have done it the way they did,” Mr. Painter said, referring to the Bush administration ad, which aired before he joined the White House. “Even though it’s nowhere near as bad as this. Nowhere near.”

Four Democratic members of Congress, including the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, have demanded that the White House take down the ads and provide information on the cost of producing and running them.

“This is the sort of government propaganda one might expect in North Korea, not the United States of America, and it is an egregious and illegal misuse of Americans’ hard-earned tax dollars,” Senators Patty Murray and Jack Reed, and Representatives Rosa DeLauro and Steny Hoyer [wrote in a letter](#) to Susie Wiles, the White House chief of staff, on Thursday.

Senator Maggie Hassan, Democrat of New Hampshire and the ranking member on the joint economic committee, also [demanded information on who created the ads.](#)

[Bayliss Wagner](#) is a political reporter and a member of the 2026-27 [Times Fellowship](#), a program for journalists early in their careers.