



AN OVERSIGHT REPORT
FROM THE OFFICE OF SENATOR ADAM SCHIFF

PROPAGANDA

HOW THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION IS
BREAKING THE LAW
AND WASTING TAXPAYER DOLLARS
WITH GIANT BANNERS OF DONALD TRUMP



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Trump Administration is spending taxpayer funds on political banners hung on federal office buildings in the style of totalitarian dictators.

A review of contracting databases has uncovered an emerging pattern of recent federal contracts for political propaganda signs that violate federal appropriations law.

In the span of four months, three federal departments have contracted to create enormous political banners. Two contracts were for large banners of Donald Trump's portrait that were hung outside the Departments of Agriculture and Labor. **A third previously undiscovered federal solicitation is for 88-foot signs to be hung on the Department of Health and Human Services** to promote Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s presidential campaign slogan "Make America Healthy Again." A review of contracting documents indicates that the signs are being made at the public's expense, with the first three signs costing at least \$50,000 in taxpayer funds and the full cost yet to be determined.



Photo by J Scott. Applewhite, AP

This pattern of contracts suggests an unprecedented and coordinated effort by the Executive Branch to use federal funds to glorify and pay tribute to a sitting U.S. President and his political agenda, **despite a longstanding legal prohibition against the use of federal funds for propaganda and self-aggrandizement purposes.** In addition to wasting taxpayer funds, these banners mimic self-aggrandizing banners, billboards, and other propaganda promoted by dictators abroad. They also serve as a stark visual manifestation of measures President Trump and his administration are taking to consolidate power and control that are antithetical to American democracy.

Whistleblowers with additional information about these banners or other partisan or propaganda purchases made with taxpayer funds should promptly report this waste and abuse directly to Congress.

Three federal departments have spent or plan to spend taxpayer money on oversized propaganda banners.

Department of Agriculture	\$16,400
Department of Health and Human Services	\$33,726
Department of Labor	Approx. \$6,000

USING APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR PROPAGANDA VIOLATES FEDERAL LAW

Since 1951, Congress has repeatedly and explicitly prohibited the use of appropriated funds for propaganda. [1] Compliance with these laws is not optional, as the Constitution requires that “[n]o Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.” (U.S. Const. art. I, § 9, cl. 7). **Appropriations bills have typically included straightforward prohibitions on spending for propaganda**, such as “No part of any appropriation contained in this Act shall be used for publicity or propaganda purposes not heretofore authorized by the Congress.” [2]

The current appropriations law, extended by a Continuing Resolution, includes language explicitly barring the spending of funds for propaganda in two separate sections:

SEC. 715. No part of any funds appropriated in this or any other Act shall be used by an agency of the executive branch, other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships, for publicity or propaganda purposes[.]

SEC. 718. No part of any appropriation contained in this or any other Act shall be used directly or indirectly, including by private contractor, for publicity or propaganda purposes within the United States not heretofore authorized by Congress. [3]

[1] GAO, Principles of Federal Appropriations Law, 4th ed., 2017 rev., ch. 3-282, § D.1.b, GAO-17-797SP (Washington, D.C. 2017) (hereinafter “GAO Principles of Fed. Approps.”).

[2] *E.g.*, Pub. L. No. 134, ch. 373, § 702, 65 Stat. 209, 223 (Aug. 31, 1951).

[3] Pub. L. 118-47, §§ 715 and 718, as extended by Pub. L. 119-4.

Although the statutes do not define propaganda, **prior prohibited uses of funds have been classified as self-aggrandizement, purely partisan materials, or covert propaganda.** [4]

Federal agencies can issue advertising materials that are not considered self-aggrandizement. Permissible activities can include promoting “an agency’s legitimate informational activities” or “the dissemination to the general public, or to particular inquirers, of information reasonably necessary to the proper administration of the laws.” [5]

In defending a prior use of government funds for advertising, the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel drew “a distinction . . . between activities that are intended to ‘give . . . information as to the work of [a] department,’ and activities that seek to ‘extol and exploit the virtues of [a] department.’” [6]

The Office of Legal Counsel further explained that the analysis should “focus[] on whether the activity in question provides important information about the agency and the discharge of its statutory mandate or instead serves to aggrandize the agency or its officials.” [7]

Similarly, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Comptroller General concluded “that the publicity or propaganda restriction prohibits ‘publicity of a nature tending to emphasize the importance of the agency or activity in question.’” [8]

In examining whether advertising is “purely partisan,” GAO has acknowledged some leeway, finding that, for example, television advertisements describing changes to Medicare were not purely partisan despite some overstatement of benefits. [9]

In contrast to prior government advertising efforts, the current banners provide no information about the agency or its statutory mandate. Instead, in what appears to be a vainglorious attempt at aggrandizement and political propaganda, they only display the President’s face and promote political slogans. As a result, any spending from appropriated funds violates the law.

[4] GAO Principles of Fed. Approps., ch. 3-282.

[5] *Id.* at 3-284.

[6] Dept. of Justice Office of Legal Counsel, General Services Admin. Use of Govt. Funds for Advertising, Jan 19, 2001, at 93, www.justice.gov/file/146151-0/dl (omissions in original).

[7] *Id.*

[8] GAO Principles of Fed. Approps., ch. 3-284 (quoting 31 Comp. Gen at 313) (noting that “[s]uch activity has become known as ‘self-aggrandizement.’”).

[9] *Id.* at 3-296.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES BANNERS

Contracting records expose previously unreported details that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is seeking to purchase large propagandistic banners with taxpayer funds. [10] The newest political banners are destined for the Hubert H. Humphrey Building in Washington, D.C., which houses HHS Headquarters and the office of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [11]

HHS issued the solicitation on July 25, 2025, with the banners to be delivered to the “Office of the Secretary.” [12] The banners are titled “Make America Healthy Again Building Banners.”

Request for Quote 75P00125Q00046	Page 4 of 53
<p>SECTION C - Description/Specifications/Statement of Work</p> <p>Make America Healthy Again Building Banners</p> <p>C.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND</p> <p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leads the national effort to improve public health. To promote the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) agenda graphic banners will be displayed on the exterior of the Hubert H. Humphrey (HHH) Building, located at 200 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20201.</p>	

The contract for these banners was awarded August 6, 2025, to a small business in Texas with no apparent expertise or experience producing large banners. [13] **The contract award obligated \$33,726.00.** [14]

The contract was amended with a Supplemental Agreement on August 20, 2025, to extend the period of performance to August 29, 2025. [15]

[10] Request for Quote 75P00125Q00046, Office of Acquisition Mgmt Servs., Dept. of Health & Human Servs., July 25, 2025, available at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

[11] *Id.* at 2.

[12] *Id.* at 1.

[13] Contract Award, Dept. of Health & Human Servs., Contract No. 75P00125C00017, available at USAspending.gov.

[14] *Id.*

[15] Supplemental Agreement, Dept. of Health & Human Servs., Contract No. 75P00125C00017, available at USAspending.gov.

Award History				
<div>Transaction History ⓘ ⓘ</div> <div>Sub-Awards ⓘ ⓘ</div> <div>Federal Account Funding ⓘ ⓘ</div>				
Modification Number	Action Date	Amount	Action Type	Transaction Description
0	08/06/2025	\$33,726	--	PRODUCTION AND INSTALLATION OF 2 BANNERS FOR THE HUBERT H. HUMPHERY BUILDING LOCATED IN WASHINGTON, D.C. read less
P00001	08/20/2025	\$0	B: SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR WORK WITHIN SCOPE	THE PURPOSE OF THIS MODIFICATION IS TO EXTEND THE POP. read less

1-2 of 2 results

Rows per page: 10 < 1 >

The solicitation requires banners that measure 11.5 feet by 88 feet and includes different artwork on each banner. [16] Contract documents show their expected placement on the HHS headquarters building. [17]

C.2 PERFORMANCE WORK STATEMENT

The Contractor shall furnish all of the necessary personnel, materials, services, facilities, (except as otherwise specified herein), and otherwise do all the things necessary for or incident to the performance of the work as set forth below:

The government will provide the contractor two (2) original artwork designs to be printed on the banners. One (1) original artwork design per banner. The dimension of the HHH Building area each banner will be placed is 11.5 feet by 88 feet (**see specifications for banner size**). The banners will face Independence Avenue and will be placed on the flat areas identified by the white arrows below on the left and right side of the building front.



INDEPENDENCE AVENUE

[16] Request for Quote 75P00125Q00046, Office of Acquisition Mgmt Servs., Dept. of Health & Human Servs., July 25, 2025, available at [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), at 4-5.

[17] *Id.* at 4.

In a clear indication of the political nature of the banners, the contract specifications required that the “[b]anners and images should last for a reasonable time, *preferably 4 years*,” (emphasis added), [18] which indicates an intention to hang the banners for the duration of President Trump’s term until January 2029.

This language also raises questions about whether political appointees were directly engaged in formulating and drafting the request.

Specifications:

- 2 exterior building banners (each banner has different artwork)
 - o Banners and images should last for a reasonable time, preferably 4 years.
- Each banner will be 11 feet wide by 88 feet tall in size
- Production and installation must be completed by early to mid-August 2025.

Nonetheless, a potential contractor pointed out in follow-up questions that “based on industry standards, achieving a four-year lifespan without some degree of fading is unlikely” (see below). [19] In response, the government’s contract amendment ignored this factual statement and merely stated that “[t]he government’s needs are provided in the solicitation. [20]

Q 8. To help us determine the best materials and production methods, could you please provide us with the artwork or an idea of the graphics for the banners?

A 8. Yes, after award pictures of the artwork will be provided.

Q 9. Can you confirm which method would be acceptable?

There are 2 materials that can be used. The more cost effective and faster installation would be to be able to drill into the top and bottom of the building and insert eye hooks into the facade top and bottom to secure the banner to the building.

The other method which is not to drill into the building (more expensive and takes more days to install) would be to use an adhesive vinyl graphic that installs directly to the facade. A boom truck or swing bridge would be needed for the installation.

A 9. Vendors may drill into the concrete structure for mounting purposes. The vendor should clarify the technique they propose and provide assurance that the technique is permanent and safe. Please provide your best quote.

Q 10. The specifications note that the banners and images should ideally last for approximately four years. I wanted to share that, based on industry standards, achieving a four-year lifespan without some degree of fading is unlikely. This is primarily due to the limitations of the substrate material, exposure to weather—particularly sunlight—and the colors used in the design.

A 10. The government’s needs are provided in the solicitation. Please provide your best quote.

Q11. The RFQ does not clarify whether drilling into the building to secure the banners is permitted.

A 11. Vendors may drill into the concrete structure for mounting purposes. The vendor should clarify the technique they propose and provide assurance that the technique is permanent and safe. Please provide your best quote.

As of publication of this report, the HHS banners have yet to be hung, and it remains to be seen whether they will only reference the MAHA political slogan or also include images of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. or Donald Trump.

Regardless, these banners appear to violate longstanding prohibitions on spending public money on propaganda.

[18] *Id.* at 5.

[19] Amendment of Solicitation 75P00125CQ00046/001, Office of Acquisition Mgmt. Servs., July 30, 2025, at 4.

[20] *Id.*

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR BANNERS

Political appointees at the Department of Labor hung the most recent Trump banner on August 24, 2025. [21] The three-story banner of President Trump's shadowed face was suspended next to a banner of President Theodore Roosevelt, with the title "American Workers First." [22] The placement of the word "First" and its oversized font, however, make it clear that this banner is a reference to Trump's political campaign slogan of "America First."

According to the Washington Post, a Department of Labor spokesperson claimed that the Trump banner cost approximately \$6,000 along with the banner of President Roosevelt. [23]

A search of federal spending data did not immediately reveal a solicitation or contract for these banners, raising questions about whether the political leadership followed federal contracting laws in securing this political statement with taxpayer funds.

The banner adorning the Department of Labor appeared at the same time as President Trump's unprecedented deployment of National Guard troops on the streets of Washington, D.C. [24]

The juxtaposition of military troops deployed in the nation's capital in front of this banner has led to widespread comparisons with banners showing portraits of dictators in other authoritarian countries. See Appendix A.



Official X.com account for U.S. Department of Labor

[21] Martha McHardy, *Giant Donald Trump Portrait Draped Over Dept. of Labor Building in DC*, NEWSWEEK, Aug. 26, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/department-labor-trump-portrait-2119185>.

[22] U.S. Dept. of Labor, "Big, Beautiful Banners," (Facebook post, Aug. 26, 2025), www.facebook.com/departmentoflabor/posts/big-beautiful-banners/1157474846428070/.

[23] Michael Birnbaum, *In 3-hour televised Cabinet meeting, Trump soaks up flattery*, WASHINGTON POST, Aug. 27, 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/08/27/trump-cabinet-flattery/. ("A Labor Department spokesperson said the banner, along with a second one featuring former president Theodore Roosevelt, cost about \$6,000.")

[24] The Associated Press, *Photos of week three of Washington's federal takeover, as troops on patrol start carrying guns*, AP NEWS, Sept. 1, 2025, <https://apnews.com/photo-gallery/trump-national-guard-police-washington-dc-photos-170363ba069f7e52a66f1e7056c24dc5>.

The public rollout of the banner confirmed its purpose was to aggrandize President Trump.

Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer promoted the banner on official social media (see picture above) and boasted about the banner in a three-hour Cabinet meeting during which Cabinet members took turns praising President Donald Trump. [25]

Chavez-DeRemer stated: “Mr. President, I invite you to see your big, beautiful face on a banner in front of the Department of Labor, because you are really the transformational president of the American worker.” [26] Again, the banner appears to violate federal laws prohibiting the use of Labor Department funds for “publicity or propaganda.” [27]



Banner from inside the Department of Labor (Photo by Anonymous) [28]

[25] Michael Birnbaum, *In 3-hour televised Cabinet meeting, Trump soaks up flattery*, WASHINGTON POST, Aug. 27, 2025 (quoting Secretary Chavez-DeRemer “referring to a three-story banner of his visage unfurled across the front of the Labor Department”), www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/08/27/trump-cabinet-flattery/.

[26] *Id.*

[27] Pub. L. No. 118-47 § 503(a) (“No part of any appropriation contained in this Act or transferred pursuant to section 4002 of Public Law 111-148 shall be used, ... for publicity or propaganda purposes[.]”).

[28] Anonymous photograph from inside the Department of Labor, via Jen Bendery, Sept. 1, 2025, <https://bsky.app/profile/jbendery.bsky.social/post/3lxsbru7d7226>.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BANNERS

The Department of Agriculture hoisted a similar propaganda banner of Trump's face alongside a banner of President Abraham Lincoln on May 14, 2025. Secretary Brooke Rollins of the Department of Agriculture also advertised those banners in official government-run social media. [29]



U.S. Department of Agriculture (Photo by Eric Garcia, The Independent)

Pictures of the banners circulating online alarmed enough people that Snopes, a website devoted to fact checking hoaxes, issued an article confirming that the banners were in fact real. [30]

Several news outlets subsequently uncovered public records regarding these banners via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). [31] Those records confirmed that the Department of Agriculture paid \$16,400 for three banners, only two of which were hung outside the Department's headquarters. [32] The third banner, which apparently depicts Trump and Rollins together, was not publicly hung and its location is currently unknown. [33]

[29] Brooke Rollins (X Post) May 15, 2025, x.com/SecRollins/status/1923140992636514799 ("Lincoln founded the 'People's Department'— today, our National Mall banners celebrate his legacy & President Trump's commitment to our farmers.")

[30] Taija PerryCook, *Huge banner of Trump hung on USDA building next to one of Lincoln*, May 16, 2025, www.snopes.com/fact-check/usda-trump-banner/.

[31] Jason Leopold, *What the USDA Spent on the Huge Trump and Lincoln Banners*, BLOOMBERG, Aug. 15, 2025, www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2025-08-15/documents-reveal-how-much-the-usda-s-massive-trump-and-lincoln-banners-cost.

[32] FOIA Documents, Dept. of Agriculture, available at <https://assets.bwbx.io/documents/users/iqjWHBFdfxIU/rPgmgSa0yIGg/v0> ("hereinafter FOIA Documents").

[33] Jason Leopold, *What the USDA Spent on the Huge Trump and Lincoln Banners*, BLOOMBERG, Aug. 15, 2025, www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2025-08-15/documents-reveal-how-much-the-usda-s-massive-trump-and-lincoln-banners-cost.

Contract documents show that the banners were related to “the Secretary’s priority.” [34] Internal emails about the installation included as recipients Trump political appointee Alec Varsamis, the Department of Agriculture’s Deputy Director of Communications, and Mason Prickett, a political appointee serving as Press Assistant. [35] Prickett made the final decision on the timing of installation, and emailed USDA employees that he was “currently talking with our on site photographer to be there for installation.” [36]

ORDER FOR SUPPLIES OR SERVICES SCHEDULE - CONTINUATION						PAGE NO 2 2025-DA-07821-F
IMPORTANT: Mark all packages and papers with contract and/or order numbers.						
DATE OF ORDER 06/12/2025		CONTRACT NO.			ORDER NO. 12314425P0030	
ITEM NO. (a)	SUPPLIES/SERVICES (b)	QUANTITY ORDERED (c)	UNIT (d)	UNIT PRICE (e)	AMOUNT (f)	QUANTITY ACCEPTED (g)
0001	FMMI Account: SE00.2503ASAAPPF BOC: 2540 Period of Performance: 05/01/2025 to 06/30/2025 To hang 3 large banners on the Whitten Building in conjunction with the Secretary's priority. Contract Type: FIRM-FIXED-PRICE The total amount of award: \$16,400.00. The obligation for this award is shown in box 17(i).				16,400.00	

The Contract Award documents listed the banner as “Growing America Since 1812” and did not disclose that the banners would include a giant image of Trump. [37] The contract documents did include a hand drawn picture of where the two banners should be hung on the Agriculture Department. [38] Like the previous examples, these banners would appear to violate federal laws prohibiting the use of funds for “publicity or propaganda.”



[34] FOIA Documents at 3.

[35] FOIA Documents at 6; See U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, USDA Announces New Presidential Appointments, April 14, 2025, www.fns.usda.gov/newsroom/usda-0070.25.

[36] FOIA Documents at 6.

[37] FOIA Documents at 1.

[38] *Id.* at 9.

APPENDIX A – BANNERS ERECTED BY DICTATORS AROUND THE WORLD

Dictators throughout history have used oversized portraits to convey their power and intimidate their subjects. In addition to the waste of taxpayer funds, the Trump Administration's propaganda banners prompt troubling questions about whether the Trump Administration is deliberately modeling itself after authoritarian regimes.

A collection of photographs of authoritarian portraits follows, serving as visual evidence of the propaganda practices in undemocratic countries.



Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-Un in North Korea in June 2024 (*Photo by Vladimir Smirnov, Sputnik, Kremlin Photo*)



Above: Saddam Hussein (Photo by Kaveh Kazemi, Getty Images)

Below: Joseph Stalin (Getty Images)





Above: Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (Photo by Marwan Naamani, AFP)

Below: Benito Mussolini Fascist Party Headquarters (The Palazzo Braschi) in 1929





Above: Benito Mussolini Fascist Party Headquarters (The Palazzo Braschi) in 1934

Below: Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela (Photo by Alejandro Cegarra for The New York Times)





Bashar al-Assad in Syria