

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 1, 2025

Danielle A. Runyan
Acting General Counsel
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Ms. Runyan:

Yesterday, the press secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Peter Kasperowicz,¹ and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, Andrew McIlroy,² sent communications to Congress and VA employees regarding the impending federal government shutdown. The communications were not limited to factual information regarding VA's contingency planning, or which operations would be impacted by a lapse in appropriations but instead, advocated for legislation, conveyed political messages or imputed actions to one political party.

Specifically, Mr. Kasperowicz's email included the following:

Radical liberals in Congress are trying to shut down the government to achieve their crazy fantasy of open borders, 'transgender' for everybody and men competing in women's sports. If they succeed, they will stop critical Veterans care and assistance programs.

Mr. McIlroy's email included the following:

President Donald J. Trump opposes a Government shutdown and strongly supports the enactment of H.R. 5371, which is a clean Continuing Resolution to fund the Government through November 21, 2025, and already passed the U.S. House of Representatives. Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands. If Congressional Democrats maintain their current posture and refuse to pass a clean Continuing Resolution to keep the Government funded before midnight on September 30, 2025, Federal appropriated funding will lapse.

Today, VA sent out an email to millions of veterans again targeting Democrats by name, writing:

¹ Email from Peter I. Kasperowicz, Press Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Subject: VA shutdown statement (Sept. 30, 2025, 10:56 AM ET).

² Email from Andrew McIlroy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Subject: VA message on Planning for Potential Lapse in Funding (Sept. 30, 2025, 5:48 PM ET).

“Unfortunately, Democrats are blocking this Continuing Resolution in the U.S. Senate due to unrelated policy demands.”³

The communications are in conflict with the Hatch Act⁴ and its requirement that federal programs be administered non-partisanly and that federal employees be protected from political coercion in the workplace.⁵ Further, these communications run afoul of the prohibition against federal agency funds being used for propaganda or lobbying purposes.⁶ We are concerned these communications not only violate the law, but are being used to spread propaganda that is antithetical to the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Therefore, we request that you respond in writing to the following questions and information requests:

1. Which VA officials were responsible for the drafting of these communications? If these communications were not drafted internally, where did they originate from, and what guidance was provided regarding the dissemination of these communications?
2. Did the Office of General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs review these communications in advance of their dissemination?
3. Which individuals and organizations were these communications disseminated to?
4. Does the Office of General Counsel for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs find that these communications comply with both the letter and spirit of the Hatch Act and anti-lobbying prohibitions in Sec. 715 of Pub. L. 118-47? Provide analysis, documentation, and citations to support this position.
5. Has the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs referred the individuals or persons responsible for the development of these communications to the Office of Special Counsel or the Office of Inspector General for investigation for impermissible use of agency resources for the purposes of lobbying or propaganda?

We await your timely response to these questions. We request that your response be provided by no later than Wednesday, October 8, 2025. As you formulate your response, we would remind you of Rule 4.1 of the Model Rules of Professional Conduct⁷ and your ethical obligations not only as a federal employee, but as a member of the Texas and New Jersey Bar Associations. If the timeliness of your response is impacted by the lapse in appropriations, please convey that immediately in writing. Should you have any questions about this request, please

³ Email from VA News (veteransaffairs@messages.va.gov), Subject: How the government shutdown impacts VA (Oct. 1, 2025, 3:08 PM ET).

⁴ See generally 5 U.S.C. §§ 7321-7326.

⁵ See U.S. Office of Special Counsel, Hatch Act Overview (<https://osc.gov/Services/pages/hatchact.aspx>) (accessed October 1, 2025).

⁶ Pub. L. 118-47 (2024), Sec. 715 states: *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, and for the preparation, distribution or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television, or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress, except in presentation to the Congress itself.*

⁷ See MODEL RULES OF PROF'L CONDUCT R. 4.1 (2019).

Danielle A. Runyan

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contact Sarah Garcia, Deputy Staff Director and General Counsel, House Veterans' Affairs Committee, at sarah.garcia@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs Committee



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee