

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2025

The Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Office of Inspector General
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Inspector General Cuffari,

I write to request that you investigate no bid media contracts awarded by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem under her “national emergency” authority.

According to public reporting, Secretary Noem has authorized multiple no bid contract awards to firms with which she and her senior advisors have personal ties, as part of an advertising campaign to discourage illegal immigration.¹ Secretary Noem has invoked her emergency authority to issue these contracts outside of the normal competitive bidding process.²

Between February and August 2025, DHS awarded \$143 million in no bid contracts to a company called Safe America Media, which was incorporated 11 days before the initial contract solicitation.³ In October, Safe America Media was contracted to help DHS produce a commercial—filmed during the government shutdown—featuring Secretary Noem on horseback at Mount Rushmore.⁴

Although not identified in public contracting disclosures, according to public reporting, a firm called Strategy Group was engaged by Safe America Media to produce the ad at Mount Rushmore.⁵

Strategy Group managed the ads for Secretary Noem’s 2022 South Dakota gubernatorial campaign and received \$8.5 million in state funds while Secretary Noem served as the Governor

¹ See Justin Elliott et al., *Firm Tied to Kristi Noem Secretly Got Money From \$220 Million DHS Ad Contracts*, PRO PUBLICA (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/kristi-noem-dhs-ad-campaign-strategy-group>.

² See *id.*

³ See *id.*; *SAFE AMERICA MEDIA LLC*, USA SPENDING, <https://www.usaspending.gov/recipient/971ab524-ead8-d256-77f2-e07785823f44-C/latest> (last visited Nov. 19, 2025); Pedro Camacho, *House Democrats Launch Investigation Into DHS ‘Vanity Project’ Ads Praising Trump’s Immigration Policies*, LATIN TIMES (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://www.latintimes.com/house-democrats-launch-investigation-dhs-vanity-project-ads-praising-trumps-immigration-policies-579112>.

⁴ See Elliot et al., *supra* note 1.

⁵ See Pedro Camacho, *DHS Hired Firm With Deep Ties to Noem for Border Ads, Masking Its Role Through Shell Company: Report*, LATIN TIMES (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.latintimes.com/dhs-hired-firm-deep-ties-noem-border-ads-masking-its-role-through-shell-company-report-591605>; Elliot et al., *supra* note 1.

of South Dakota.⁶ Secretary Noem's top advisor at DHS, Corey Lewandowski, has worked extensively at Strategy Group.⁷ The firm's Chief Executive Officer is married to DHS's chief spokesperson, Tricia McLaughlin.⁸

This is not the first time the Department has used the claim of a "national emergency" to issue no bid contract awards. Earlier this year, DHS invoked the measure to skip a competitive bidding process for an ad featuring Secretary Noem thanking President Trump.⁹ One of the firms contracted for the ad, People Who Think, LLC, is headed by Jay Connaughton, a former Trump campaign advisor. Connaughton worked with Lewandowski, Noem's chief advisor, on Jeff Landry's gubernatorial campaign in Louisiana.¹⁰

In June 2025, Secretary Noem announced that she would personally approve all DHS contracts over \$100,000.¹¹ These awards call into question whether DHS, under Secretary Noem's leadership, is fulfilling its obligations under federal procurement laws to consider bids "with complete impartiality and with preferential treatment for none."¹²

In order to understand the extent to which Secretary Noem's advertising campaign and contract process complies with applicable federal laws and regulations, I request that your office initiate a review of DHS's contracts associated with advertising campaigns since January 20, 2025.

In addition, please provide a response to the following:

1. What is DHS's process for reviewing bids associated with its advertising campaigns?
 - a. Is this process compliant with federal procurement rules?

⁶ See Elliot et al., *supra* note 1.

⁷ See *id.*

⁸ See *id.*

⁹ See Adriana Gomez Licon, *How the White House Hired Republican Political Firms to Launch an Anti-Migrant Ad Campaign*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 11, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/dhs-immigration-award-republican-ad-campaign-e7939619195791493e828dfd20604d65>.

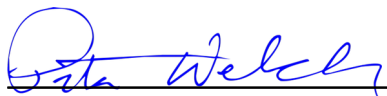
¹⁰ See *id.*; Adriana Gomez Licon, *DHS Expedites Process to Award Two Republican-Linked Firms Part of its \$200-Million Ad Campaign*, LOS ANGELES TIMES (Mar. 10, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2025-03-10/dhs-expedites-process-to-award-two-republican-linked-firms-part-of-its-200-million-ad-campaign>.

¹¹ See Maxine Joselow et al., *Noem's Spending Rule Causes Delays at Homeland Security Dept.*, NEW YORK TIMES (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/21/us/kristi-noem-spending-contracts-homeland-security-department.html>.

¹² According to 48 C.F.R. § 3.101-1, "[g]overnment business shall be conducted in a manner above reproach and, except as authorized by statute or regulation, with complete impartiality and with preferential treatment for none. Transactions relating to the expenditure of public funds require the highest degree of public trust and an impeccable standard of conduct. The general rule is to avoid strictly any conflict of interest or even the appearance of a conflict of interest in Government-contractor relationships."

2. Did Secretary Noem personally review and approve the contracts awarded to Safe America Media or People Who Think, LLC?
3. Has DHS awarded any other contracts to Safe America Media or People Who Think, LLC? If so, please provide a list of such contracts and a copy of each contract.
4. Does Secretary Noem have any personal or professional relationships with the firms Safe America Media, People Who Think LLC, or their subcontractors? If so, please provide details on their relationship.
5. Do any senior personnel at DHS have any personal or professional relationships with the firms Safe America Media, People Who Think LLC, or their subcontractors? If so, please provide a list of those personnel and details on their relationship(s).
6. Do any other firms that have been awarded contracts to conduct advertising since January 20, 2025 have any personal or professional relationships with Secretary Noem? If so, please provide a copy of each contract.
 - a. Did Secretary Noem personally review and approve the contract(s) awarded to these other firm(s)?
 - b. Do any of these firms have any personal or professional relationships with senior personnel at DHS? If so, please provide a list of those personnel and details on their relationship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dita Welch", is written over a horizontal line.