

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2026

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,

On March 2, 2026, you notified Congress that over the last several months, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has “systematically obstructed the work” of your office.¹ We write to request information concerning the Department’s lack of cooperation and how it may be affecting any inquiry related to former Secretary Kristi Noem’s approval of no bid contracts to produce ad campaigns under her “national emergency authority.”²

On November 19, 2025, Senator Welch sent you a letter requesting that your office investigate former Secretary Noem’s approval of \$220 million in media contracts—absent a competitive bidding process—to firms with which she and her senior advisors have personal ties.³ The following day, Senator Blumenthal sent a similar letter to you with members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.⁴

In a January 21, 2026, response, you assured Senator Welch that his request had been provided to the OIG’s Office of Audits for “consideration in its work planning process, which includes a mandated annual audit of grants and contracts awarded by means other than full and open competition.”⁵

¹ Letter from Joseph Cuffari, Inspector General of the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security to U.S. Senator Rand Paul, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, et al. (Mar. 2, 2026), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/DHS-GC-Percival-Letter.pdf>.

² See Justin Elliott et al., *Firm Tied to Kristi Noem Secretly Got Money From \$220 Million DHS Ad Contracts*, PROPUBLICA (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/kristi-noem-dhs-ad-campaign-strategygroup>.

³ Letter from U.S. Senator Peter Welch to Joseph Cuffari, Inspector General of the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (Nov. 19, 2025), <https://www.welch.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/20251119-Letter-to-IG-Cuffari-from-Sen.-Peter-Welch.pdf>.

⁴ Letter from U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal, Ruben Gallego, Gary Peters, and Andy Kim to Joseph Cuffari, Inspector General of the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security (Nov. 20, 2025), https://www.gallego.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Letter_to_DHS_IG_-_Improper_DHS_Advertising_Contract_Award_-_11-20-2025.pdf.

⁵ Letter from Joseph Cuffari, Inspector General of the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security to U.S. Senator Peter Welch (Jan. 21, 2026), on file with the Office of U.S. Senator Peter Welch.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

It appears that your office has initiated a probe, which may be separate from the annual audit, into the circumstances surrounding the Department's decision to award these contracts. According to public reporting, former Secretary Noem is "retaliating" against this probe by blocking access to key material on a number of OIG investigations because she and Mr. Lewandowski "could be implicated in the watchdog probe" of these no bid advertising contracts.⁶

This reporting raises serious concerns about whether DHS is intentionally restricting OIG's access to information necessary to complete a review of the contracts awarded as part of the Department's ad campaigns. In order to better understand challenges that DHS OIG may be facing in its review of these contracts, please provide answers to the following questions by March 27, 2026.

1. Has DHS OIG initiated an investigation into DHS's award of \$220 million in no bid contracts related to its ad campaigns?
 - a. If so, when is this review expected to be complete?
2. Have any of DHS OIG's inquiries related to DHS's award of media contracts associated with the ad campaign been impeded by the Department?
 - a. If so, what restrictions has DHS imposed and who has imposed them?
 - b. Please provide any written or electronic communications with any Executive Branch official that discusses the impediments or restrictions you are facing.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Permanent
Subcommittee on
Investigations

⁶ See Susan Crabtree, *DHS IG Launched Probe into \$220M Contract for Noem Ads*, REALCLEAR POLITICS (MAR. 11, 2026), https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2026/03/11/dhs_ig_launched_probe_into_220m_contract_for_noem_ads_153932.html#2.