

Banners of Trump's face on D.C. buildings raise propaganda concerns

-Mini Montgomery, Axios



Banners hang on the USDA headquarters in May. Photo: Mandel Ngan/AFP via Getty Images

Banners featuring President Trump's face that have been displayed on the exterior of federal buildings around D.C. are igniting pushback.

Why it matters: While some have praised the banners, [others](#) have [worried](#) they represent [overreach](#) on behalf of the administration.

- This comes as Trump increasingly strives to leave his mark on Washington via moves like last June's [military parade](#), the [city's crime crackdown](#), and his sprawling [White House ballroom](#) renovation.

Driving the news: The Trump administration used at least \$50,000 in taxpayer dollars to create large signs featuring the president's face or policies, alleges a new [report](#) released by Sen. Adam Schiff's office.

- The California Democrat calls the move illegal, saying the banners amount to "propaganda" mirroring "totalitarian dictators."

- White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson told Axios the "report would only be valuable as toilet paper" and declined to comment on the specific claims Schiff's office made.

State of play: Three federal agencies have contracted to create these types of banners over the last four months, according to Schiff's report and various news articles.

Department of Agriculture: Spent \$16,400 for [two banners](#) featuring [Trump](#) and former President Lincoln, which were installed in May and now appear to have been [removed](#), Washingtonian reports.

- A third banner featuring Trump with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins was commissioned, reports [Bloomberg](#), although TBD whether it's been displayed anywhere.
- USDA didn't return Axios' request for comment.

Department of Labor: Spent \$6,000 for two [banners](#) featuring [Trump's](#) and former [President Theodore Roosevelt's](#) faces, reports the [Washington Post](#).



- The banners were originally installed for Labor Day, but will stay up through America's 250th celebration due to "tremendous positive response," a department spokesperson tells Axios.
- They were temporarily taken down for maintenance "at no charge to taxpayers," but will be reinstalled Wednesday, says the spokesperson.

Department of Health and Human Services: Spent \$33,726 for signs to be placed on the agency's headquarters promoting Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s "Make America Healthy Again" campaign, Schiff's report found by reviewing contracting records.

- It's unclear when the signs will be created and installed, per the report.
- An HHS spokesperson didn't provide more details about the department's signs, but tells Axios that "all HHS solicitations go through a full legal and compliance review to ensure they meet federal requirements."

What they're saying: Schiff's office alleges in the report that the use of taxpayer funds for these banners breaks the law because they qualify as "propaganda."

- While agencies are allowed to create advertising materials, these banners don't or likely will not include any information about the departments or their work, says the report — instead simply featuring the president's image and political slogans.
- Schiff's office compares the banners to those used by Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong-Un, Saddam Hussein and Benito Mussolini.

Schiff's office declined to comment beyond the report, directing Axios to a summary calling the contracts an "unprecedented" effort to use "federal funds to glorify and pay tribute to a sitting U.S. president and his political agenda."