

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CONTACT:** Laura Capps/Melissa Wagoner  
September 30, 2005 (202) 224-2633  
\*\*LETTER BELOW AND ATTACHED

**KENNEDY: GAO BLASTS ILLEGAL PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AT THE U.S.  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

*Report Issued to Kennedy and Lautenberg Find Multiple Violations, Including Payments to  
Armstrong Williams*

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) ruled that the Bush Department of Education illegally used taxpayer dollars to fund a covert propaganda campaign, aimed at boosting the image of the President’s education agenda. The GAO decision was the result of an inquiry by United States Senators Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) and Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ).

Senator Kennedy said, “The taxpayer funded propaganda coming from the White House is another sign of the culture of corruption that pervades the White House and Republican leadership. Deceiving the American people about government policies and proposals is not the American way. America can do better than this, and we ought to have a government as good as its people. Rather than spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on producing Republican propaganda, the Administration should return those funds and live up to the promises they made to America’s students and teachers.”

In response to the scathing decision by the GAO, Lautenberg and Kennedy sent a letter to Education Secretary Margaret Spellings urging her to abide by the law and recover the misspent funds, and come to Capitol Hill immediately to meet with the lawmakers on this matter.

The GAO found that the Education Department violated the “publicity and propaganda” law by making payments to the journalist Armstrong Williams and by paying a public relations firm to produce fake television news stories promoting the President’s education programs. For both violations, the GAO directed the Department of Education to invoke the Federal “Anti-Deficiency Act” to begin the process of recovering the misspent taxpayer dollars.

In addition, the GAO alerted the Department of Education’s General Counsel to another potential violation of the law regarding payments to the North American Precis Syndicate (NAPS) to write and distribute an article for placement in newspapers across the country.

“The Bush Administration took taxpayer funds that should have gone towards helping kids learn and diverted it to a political propaganda campaign,” said Senator Lautenberg. “The Administration needs to return these funds to the Treasury. Parents want education funds to go to our nation’s schools, not political operatives and journalists-for-hire. The Administration gets an F for treating education funds responsibly.”

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September 30, 2005

Honorable Margaret Spellings  
Secretary  
Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

As I'm sure you know, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) ruled today that the Department of Education illegally used taxpayer dollars to conduct covert propaganda activities. Specifically, the GAO found that the Department violated the "publicity and propaganda" law by making payments to the journalist Armstrong Williams and by paying a public relations firm to produce fake television news stories promoting the President's education programs.

In addition, the GAO alerted your General Counsel to another potential violation of the law regarding payments to the North American Precis Syndicate (NAPS) by the Department to write and distribute an article for placement in newspapers across the country. The GAO advised the General Counsel to investigate whether these payments were for prohibited "publicity and propaganda."

As a result of the illegal payments mentioned above, the GAO has said that the Department must abide by the Anti-Deficiency Act, which requires that it seek recovery of the misspent funds. We urge you to move promptly to implement the GAO's directives and return these taxpayer dollars to the Treasury.

We appreciate your commitment to meet with us once the GAO completed its investigation. We would like to do so as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Lautenberg

Edward M. Kennedy

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