



CITIZENS FOR
RESPONSIBILITY &
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

July 7, 2026

The Honorable Mitch Behm
Deputy Inspector General, performing the duties of the Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Request for investigation of ethics violations related to Secretary Duffy's use of his official social media account to promote his spouse's book

Dear Deputy Inspector General Behm,

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) respectfully requests that the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (“DOT”) Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) investigate potential violations of the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees and any other relevant violations of federal law related to Secretary Sean Duffy’s use of his official social media account to promote his wife’s new book. Agency social media accounts are meant to convey important information relevant to all Americans about the agency’s work and mission—in this case DOT’s efforts to improve transportation across the country—not to highlight or promote side business projects of an agency official’s family. Federal law bans agency officials from using official government resources to promote private commercial products, including books. CREW urges DOT OIG to investigate the use of the agency’s social media accounts for the personal gain of the secretary or other agency officials and ensure that proper internal controls are in place to reasonably prevent future violations.

Factual background

According to recent public reports and social media posts, Secretary Duffy used his official X account handle, @SecDuffy, to repost his wife’s social media post promoting her book, “All American Patriotism.”¹ Duffy’s wife, Rachel Campos-Duffy, is a Fox News television host and published a new book in April.² On June 25, Campos-Duffy promoted her book on her own X account, @RCamposDuffy, explaining that the book celebrates “the spirit of 1776” and including

¹ Somaiyah Hafeez, *Transport Secretary Sean Duffy uses official government account to promote wife’s book*, Irish Star (June 25, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/2umfrb7e>; MeidasTouch Post, Facebook (June 25, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/2n76jyun>.

² Rachel Campos-Duffy, Facebook (Apr. 14, 2026) <https://tinyurl.com/yhmvnw4x>.

three pictures of herself showing the book to President Trump.³ The post also includes a fourth photo—apparently from the same day based on their attire—of Campos-Duffy and the president with Secretary Duffy, as the Duffys each give thumbs up while standing on either side of the president.⁴ The book is not visible in that photo, but Campos-Duffy’s post includes a link to foxnews.com/books which does prominently feature the book at the top of the page along with an “Order Now” button.⁵

Secretary Sean Duffy reposted



Rachel Campos-Duffy @RCa... · 37m

So proud that my book, “All American Patriotism,” is helping families catch the spirit of 1776!

President Trump agrees that America’s 250th birthday needs to be celebrated “bigly”! It was an honor to talk with him about America’s greatness and present him with my book, which I dedicated to him. 🇺🇸

foxnews.com/books



President Donald J. Trump and Secretary Sean Duffy

FOX NEWS books

All American Patriotism
Celebrating 250 Years of America's Greatness

Order Now

³ Rachel Campos-Duffy (@RCamposDuffy), X (June 25, 2026 at 3:32 AM), <https://x.com/RCamposDuffy/status/2070168308490359074>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* citing Fox News, Fox News Books (last visited June 29, 2026), <https://www.foxnews.com/books>; see also Wayback Machine, Fox News Books, (June 23, 2026) <https://web.archive.org/web/20260623221632/https://www.foxnews.com/books>.

While Secretary Duffy does not appear to be directly affiliated or supporting the book itself in his wife's post, he later reposted her post from his official DOT X account, @SecDuffy. That account serves as his official account, with the profile identifying Duffy as "20th Secretary of @USDOT serving under the leadership of President Trump."⁶ He uses the account to comment on subjects within his agency's jurisdiction, including a tunnel system in Nashville,⁷ flyovers in D.C. airspace⁸ and the world's largest truck stop in Iowa.⁹ However, he has also used the account to feature his family, posting messages about the role of families in America¹⁰ and promote his own family's road trip that they filmed for a reality television series using private sponsors,¹¹ an issue CREW requested your office investigate earlier this year.¹²

As a standard part of onboarding procedures, Secretary Duffy certified that he received an initial ethics briefing.¹³ The offending repost promoting his wife's book is no longer on Secretary Duffy's official account and appears to have been deleted.

Relevant law

Secretary Duffy's reposting of his wife's post promoting her book that is commercially available for purchase falls squarely under federal regulations governing officials' use of their position and government resources for private gain. The Standards of Ethical Conduct for Executive Branch Employees clearly state that executive branch officials:

may not use their public office for their own private gain; for the endorsement of any product, service, or enterprise (except as otherwise permitted by this part or other applicable law or regulation); or for the private gain of friends, relatives, or persons with whom the employee is affiliated in a nongovernmental capacity.¹⁴

This rule implements one of the core principles of government ethics, ensuring that federal officials serve the public interest above their own interests and preventing them from using the weight of the federal government's resources to influence private business on behalf of their family or personal associates.¹⁵

⁶ Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X, <https://x.com/SecDuffy>.

⁷ Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (June 25, 2026 at 10:04 PM), <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2070266922135097458>.

⁸ Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (June 26, 2026 at 8:33 PM), <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2070606440629141580>.

⁹ Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (June 19, 2026 at 7:38 PM), <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2068055874514395186>.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (June 25, 2026 at 7:32 PM), <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2070228555284275534>.

¹¹ Sec'y Sean Duffy (@SecDuffy), X (May 8, 2026 at 10:37 PM) <https://x.com/SecDuffy/status/2052880512596013312>.

¹² Letter from Donald K. Sherman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, to The Honorable Mitch Behm Deputy Inspector General, performing the duties of the Inspector General, U.S. Dep't of Transp. (May 11, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/ymx47vwj>.

¹³ Sean Duffy, Ethics Agreement Compliance Certification (Apr. 27, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/3nkr23ev>.

¹⁴ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702. The exceptions to this rule require that the endorsement furthers a statutory authority to promote the product or results from documentation of compliance with agency requirements or agency programs of recognition. See 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702(c)(1)-(2).

¹⁵ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.101(a). See also 5 C.F.R. § 2635.101(b)(1), (b)(7), (b)(9).

Book endorsements are one of the specific examples of potential misuse of position that the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) had in mind when it promulgated these rules. OGE has specifically explained that this rule would prohibit an official from “us[ing] their official title or refer[ing] to their Government position in a book jacket endorsement of a novel [...] written by an author whose work they admire. Nor may they do so in a book review published in a newspaper.”¹⁶ This example illustrates that the endorsement of a book made because of a personal admiration of the author—regardless of the medium in which the endorsement is made—violates the misuse of position rules.

OGE guidance on use of social media accounts clearly instructs that “official accounts are for official purposes.”¹⁷ In guidance to agencies and executive branch programs, OGE explained that “employees who are entrusted with the operation of official social media accounts must prevent unauthorized use of those accounts and avoid improper endorsements of private organizations on such accounts.”¹⁸

To any extent there may have been a legitimate reason for DOT to feature products related to the 250th anniversary of America’s independence, selecting only one book for the secretary to highlight and that book being one written and sold by the secretary’s wife, shows preferential treatment that affects the secretary’s own financial interests. OGE regulations prohibit any employee from acting on behalf of the agency in certain matters that would directly affect their financial interests, including those of their spouse.¹⁹ It further bars the employee from taking any action on behalf of the agency that would reasonably raise questions about whether he is acting impartially.²⁰

Federal ethics regulations require Secretary Duffy, as an agency leader, to receive an individualized ethics briefing within 15 days of his appointment to discuss immediate ethics obligations.²¹ If not at the same time as his initial ethics briefing, he was required to receive training on the range of ethics obligations—including misuse of position and impartiality—of all employees within three months of his appointment.²²

Areas for investigation

This request for investigation is the second that CREW has submitted regarding Secretary Duffy’s potential violations of the misuse of position regulations this year. To maintain the integrity of the agency and the public’s trust that the agency is operating in the best interests of all Americans, not just those in power, it is imperative that OIG thoroughly review these incidents, as well as identify and report corrective actions that are being taken to ensure that this pattern of misconduct does not continue to erode the public trust.

¹⁶ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702(c), example 4 to paragraph (c).

¹⁷ U.S. Office of Gov’t Ethics, Legal Advisory LA-15-03, The Standards of Conduct as Applied to Personal Social Media Use at 6 (Apr. 9, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/3t6sdfdn> (distinguishing how officials may use official social media accounts).

¹⁸ U.S. Office of Gov’t Ethics, Legal Advisory LA-23-03, The Standards of Conduct and 18 U.S.C. § 208 as Applied to Official Social Media Use at 1 (Jan. 30, 2023), <https://tinyurl.com/3ue2z8z3>.

¹⁹ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(a)(1).

²⁰ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(a)(3).

²¹ 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305.

²² 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304.

- Did Secretary Duffy violate 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702 when he reposted his wife’s post promoting her new book on his official X account? If so, has the agency taken remedial action commensurate with any consequences that other agency employees would face in the same circumstances?
- Did Secretary Duffy receive an initial ethics briefing pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305 and initial ethics training that covered misuse of position pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2638.304? Did that training cover his obligations under OGE regulations specific to misuse of position and impartiality? Did the training cover use of social media accounts under the ethics rules and agency policy?
- Has Secretary Duffy received any additional training, advice or written guidance regarding his use of his position and its resources and perks to benefit his family, including his family’s road trip that was paid for by private companies with business before DOT and his recent post regarding his wife’s book promotion?
- Are sufficient internal controls in place concerning procedures and protocols that will reasonably prevent additional violations of the misuse of position regulations going forward, including, for example, training for any staff responsible for posting or reviewing posts from official DOT social media accounts?

Conclusion

The Department of Transportation’s mission is “[t]o ensure our nation has the safest, most efficient and modern transportation system in the world; that improves the quality of life for all American people and communities, from rural to urban, and increases the productivity and competitiveness of American workers and businesses.”²³ That mission does not encompass use of departmental resources to elevate the secretary’s wife’s personal commercial endeavor as an author, providing greater exposure for a new audience of potential buyers. Secretary Duffy should have known about his obligations related to misuse of his position and agency resources, which include the secretary’s social media account, and his duty to remain impartial in carrying out his official duties after receiving ethics guidance from agency ethics officials during onboarding pursuant to OGE regulations. His use of his office, for at least the second time this year, to provide for the private gain of his own family shows a pattern of taking advantage of the privilege of public service to create opportunities for his family that other American families lack because they do not have access to the government’s resources. This pattern must be stopped.

CREW sincerely appreciates your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Donald K. Sherman
President and Chief Executive Officer

²³ U.S. Dep’t of Transp. (last visited July 1, 2026), <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/safetyfirst/us-department-transportation>.