Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2004

Dara Corrigan
Acting Principal Deputy Inspector General
Department of Health and Human Services
Office of the Inspector General
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. Corrigan:

We are writing to request an investigation of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) involvement in a taxpayer-funded advertising campaign to promote the Administration's Medicare bill. Specifically, we are concerned that this effort is a use of taxpayer funds for political purposes and that the Administration will be using its own campaign operatives to place the ads.

On February 3rd, the White House announced that it will use $9.5 million from HHS for a television ad campaign to "rebut criticism of the new Medicare law". In addition, $3.1 million will be used for newspaper, radio and Internet ads in both English and Spanish. Why would the Administration undertake this program two years before the program is to even start.

It has also come to our attention that a media firm currently working for the President's re-election campaign has been hired to purchase the $9.5 million worth of television ad time for this new commercial. National Media Inc. stands to make a windfall from this campaign. This is the same company that has been repeatedly hired for ad campaigns primarily funded by the Republican party and by the drug industry. National Media Inc. has done ads for Citizens for Better Medicare, a drug industry front group that has spent tens of millions of dollars on ads attacking lawmakers interested in lowering the cost of prescription drugs.

Therefore, we would like you to conduct an investigation that focuses on the following:

- Is it legal to use taxpayer money to fund this advertising campaign?
- Does the ad campaign violate federal law under 31 USC 1301(a), dealing with the appropriate application of funds, and 5 USC 7321(a), dealing with political participation?
- Has any other Administration conducted an informational campaign two years prior to implementation?
- Why was the decision made to purchase the time through National Media, Inc., rather than through the firm that created the advertisements? Was any individual from the

White House involved in the selection of National Media, Inc.?

- Was the selection of the advertising firm competitively bid?
- How were the media markets where the ads will run selected? And what relationship do those markets have to the 2004 Presidential campaign?

During a time when we are asked to eliminate or cut critical programs, we want to ensure that the Administration is not using taxpayer money for partisan political gain. We look forward to you investigating this matter promptly.

Sincerely,

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Bernie Sanders
Member of Congress

Tom Allen
Member of Congress

Marion Berry
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress