

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2012

The Honorable Timothy Geithner
Secretary, Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Geithner:

As the Ranking Members of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, we share responsibility for oversight of Treasury activities, for authorization of those activities, and for the funding of your Department's operation. Over the past few years, Treasury activities in the so-called "social media" (e.g., Treasury's: "Treasury Notes" blog; "Twitter" account; "Facebook" page; "YouTube" postings; "Flickr" entries; "slideshare" entries) have been expanded significantly and at some cost to the taxpayers.

In recent postings to the Treasury Notes blog, Treasury's Twitter account, Treasury's Facebook page, and to slideshare, the Treasury department broadcast, under Treasury's logo, the attached "infographic" which identifies appropriations legislation pending before the Congress as "Pound Foolish." Elsewhere throughout many of your social media postings, there are links to presentations designed to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress. For example, there are links in your social media postings to a 2011 interview on BloombergTV with you, during which you advocated that Congress adopt what the President labeled his "American Jobs Act" and you stated that "if Congress doesn't act, it'll be because Republicans decided they did not want to do anything to help the economy."

Your political rhetoric aside, Treasury's social media links to instances in which you advocate that Congress act on legislative proposals seem contrary to appropriations language (e.g., Sections 716 and 719 of P.L. 112-74). The infographic referred to above appears clearly to be designed to defeat legislation pending before the Congress. At a minimum, such activity runs counter to P.L. 112-74 and a statute (P.L. 66-5; 41 Stat. 68; 18 U.S.C. 1913) forbidding agencies from spending appropriated funds to encourage the public to contact Members of Congress.

With respect to the attached infographic, while you continue to promote the so-called "Dodd-Frank" financial reforms, your interest in such promotion does not constitute a rationale for spending funds appropriated to Treasury in an attempt to defeat appropriations legislation pending before Congress. Moreover, it is unclear why the Treasury Department is spending taxpayer funds advocating that more funds be appropriated to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). Those agencies stand apart from Treasury.

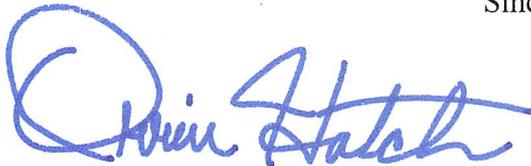
I request that you respond to the following, by close of business on July 31:

1. Identify any and all "social media" outlets used by Treasury.

2. Identify your understanding of the laws, regulations, guidelines, and precedent governing what you may or may not broadcast on your social media outlets.
3. Provide all internal (to the Treasury Department) policies and procedures governing what you may or may not broadcast on your social media outlets, including the date(s) on which those policies and procedures were adopted and modified.
4. Provide an accounting of the Treasury personnel, in terms of full-time equivalents and outlays for their work time, devoted to feeding, monitoring, updating, and maintaining your social media outlet presence.
5. Provide an accounting of any public relations or public affairs firms with which Treasury contracts for services related to your social media outlets, and associated outlays.
6. Provide Treasury's policies on social media "linking," including the date(s) on which those policies were adopted and modified.
7. Provide Treasury's policies on "retweeting" posts, such as the "retweets" of "tweets" of the White House, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or other independent agencies.
8. Identify what your objective was in broadcasting, across many social media outlets, the attached infographic, and why your Department is lobbying on behalf of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission with respect to appropriations.
9. Provide any communications that your Department had with the SEC and CFTC with respect to the attached infographic.
10. Identify what you believe are limits on what your social media outlets may broadcast to express your Department's interest in supporting or defeating legislation pending before the Congress.

We will appreciate your prompt response to these requests.

Sincerely,



Orrin G. Hatch
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance



Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Financial
Services and General Government

Enclosure