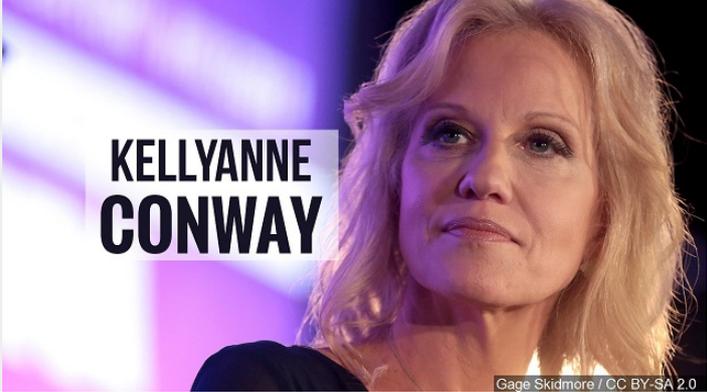


FEDERAL AGENCY RECOMMENDS WHITE HOUSE AIDE CONWAY BE FIRED

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**KELLYANNE
CONWAY**

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WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal watchdog agency recommended Thursday that President Donald Trump fire one of his most ardent defenders, counselor [Kellyanne Conway](#), for repeatedly violating a law that limits political activity by government workers.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel, which is unrelated to special counsel Robert Mueller’s office, said in a letter to Trump that Conway has been a “repeat offender” of the Hatch Act by disparaging Democratic presidential candidates while speaking in her official capacity during television interviews and on social media.

Federal law prohibits employees of the executive branch from using their official authority or influence to affect the result of an election. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence are exempt from the Hatch Act, but there are no exceptions for White House employees.

The agency does not have the authority to fire Conway, who was appointed by Trump, so it would be up to the president to follow its recommendation and dismiss one of his most unwavering defenders. The recommendation to fire Conway is the first time the watchdog office has recommended the removal of a White House official over Hatch Act violations.

Special Counsel Henry Kerner’s letter to Trump states: “Ms. Conway’s violations, if left unpunished, send a message to all federal employees that they need not abide by the Hatch Act’s restrictions. Her



actions erode the principal foundation of our democratic system — the rule of law.”

Conway told reporters who encountered her in the White House press office, “I have no reaction.”

White House spokesman Steven Groves called the agency’s decision “unprecedented” and “deeply flawed” and said it violated Conway’s constitutional rights to free speech and due process.

“Its decisions seem to be influenced by media pressure and liberal organizations — and perhaps OSC should be mindful of its own mandate to act in a fair, impartial, non-political manner, and not misinterpret or weaponize the Hatch Act,” Groves said in a statement.

A summary of the investigation into Conway stated that beginning in February, Conway engaged in a pattern of partisan attacks on Democratic presidential candidates. She called Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey “sexist” and a “tinny” motivational speaker. In another interview, she accused Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts of “lying” about her ethnicity and “appropriating somebody else’s heritage.” And she attacked former U.S. Rep. Beto O’Rourke of Texas for not thinking the women running “are good enough to be president.” It also cited her description of former Vice President Joe Biden as lacking “vision.”

The summary also noted that she used her Twitter account to conduct political activity. For example, she retweeted a March 31 message that referred to Biden as “Creepy Uncle Joe” and “took it upon herself to outline other faults she found in Mr. Biden’s candidacy,” the report said.

The Office of Special Counsel also noted that, during a May 29 media interview, Conway minimized the significance of the law as applied to her.

When asked during the interview about the Hatch Act, Conway replied: “If you’re trying to silence me through the Hatch Act, it’s not going to work,” and “Let me know when the jail sentence starts.”

Kerner told Trump in his letter that career staff in his office have long conducted thorough and impartial investigations of alleged Hatch Act violations by senior officials in administrations from both parties.

“Never has OSC had to issue multiple reports to the President concerning Hatch Act violations by the same individual,” Kerner wrote. “Ms. Conway’s actions and statements stand in stark contrast to the culture of compliance promised by your White House Counsel and undermine your efforts to create and enforce such a culture.”

Kerner said he therefore would “respectfully request” that Conway be held to the same standards as other federal employees and that “you find removal from federal service to be the appropriate disciplinary action.”

In March 2018, the Office of Special Counsel found that Conway violated the law during two television interviews in which she advocated for and against candidates in the [2017 Alabama special election for U.S. Senate](#) .



The Office of Special Counsel is an independent agency that protects federal employees from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing.

Career government officials found to have violated the Hatch Act can be fired, suspended or demoted, and fined up to \$1,000. The 1939 law allows government officials to personally donate money to political committees or engage in a variety of partisan activities, so long as they do so during their personal time and don't use government resources.

Conway has been a fiery defender of Trump, doing so during frequent appearances on cable TV news programs and in answering questions from reporters at the White House. [Trump has praised her for her "success"](#) in her career.

Conway is a former pollster who helped Trump win election in 2016 as his campaign manager.