

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

<https://oversight.house.gov>

Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Committee on Oversight and Reform Business Meeting - H.R. 2662, The IG Independence and Empowerment Act May 25, 2021

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

H.R. 2662, the IG Independence and Empowerment Act, is a package of critical reforms to strengthen the independence and authority of federal inspectors general.

I introduced this bill with Leader Hoyer, Subcommittee Chairman Connolly, Subcommittee Chairman Lynch, Vice Chair Gomez, Congresswoman Porter, and Congressman Lieu.

The IG Independence and Empowerment Act contains a bill that I authored last year to protect IGs from political retaliation. This reform would allow an IG to be removed only for a documented cause, based on a defined list of legitimate, nonpartisan reasons—such as malfeasance, knowing violation of the law, or gross mismanagement.

I introduced this provision last year after the previous Administration retaliated against multiple IGs. Last April and May, President Trump fired the IGs for the State Department and the Intelligence Community after they conducted oversight of the President and his top advisors.

This legislation would ensure that IGs are protected against this type of retaliation.

Supporting IGs, and ensuring that they can perform their work with independence and access to information, has long been a bipartisan issue in this Committee.

The IG Independence and Empowerment Act contains measures that this Committee has reported out favorably in the past with unanimous, bipartisan support.

One example is the IG Subpoena Authority Act, which was introduced this Congress by Vice Chair Gomez, to give IGs the ability to compel testimony from contractors and former federal employees. This provision includes bipartisan compromises worked out years ago between Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings.

Another bipartisan measure in this bill is the Integrity Committee Transparency Act, which was introduced by Chairman Connolly and Ranking Member Hice, and which this Committee approved unanimously earlier this month.

This also includes the Inspector General Access Act, to provide greater accountability for DOJ attorneys by closing the loophole that prohibits the Inspector General from initiating attorney misconduct investigations. This was introduced by Congresswoman Ross, with bipartisan support from Congressman Issa, Subcommittee

Chairman Raskin, myself, Subcommittee Chairman Connolly, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Hice.

The IG Independence and Empowerment Act also includes Congresswoman Porter's provisions to ensure that temporary Acting IGs are independent and qualified to serve in that role. And finally, a commonsense reform proposed by Congresswoman Speier that would enhance training for Inspectors General is included in the substitute amendment being considered by the Committee.

Components of this bill have received strong support from the National Taxpayers Union and R Street Institute. In a letter to the Committee, those groups highlighted support for several pieces of this bill and urged us to work together on a bipartisan basis to enact needed reforms to strengthen Inspectors General. Without objection, I will place that letter in the record.

We also received a support letter from DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz, with helpful background on provisions of the bill that would allow his office to investigate DOJ attorney misconduct and provisions that would grant IGs testimonial subpoena authority. Without objection, I will place that letter in the record.

IG Horowitz wrote:

"I encourage all members of the Committee to support these important reforms, in the long bipartisan tradition of this Committee on such matters, and to improve government effectiveness and accountability."

Finally, the Project on Government Oversight, or POGO, sent a letter urging the Committee to approve this bill and, without objection, I will place that letter in the record.

POGO Executive Director Danielle Brian wrote:

"The IG Independence and Empowerment Act represents a comprehensive approach to some of the biggest issues the inspector general community faces today, and I urge Congress to prioritize enacting it."

I thank all Members who worked on pieces of this bill and I urge every Member of the Committee to support it.

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Contact: Aryele Bradford, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181