

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly

H.R. 4917, The IG Subpoena Authority Act

February 6, 2018

Thank you Mr. Chairman. This bill would give Inspectors General the ability to subpoena witnesses to testify.

This would be a significant new authority. I supported granting testimonial subpoena authority to Inspectors General as part of the Inspector General Empowerment Act that passed the House of Representatives last year. However, this provision was removed from the final bill before it became law due to concerns from the Department of Justice that broad testimonial subpoena authority could interfere with DOJ investigations.

I believe most IGs would act responsibly. It is important, however, that we include safeguards to protect against potential abuse of this new authority.

This bill includes several such safeguards. The bill would require an IG, before issuing a subpoena, to go through two reviews. The first review would be conducted by the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency. A panel of three Council members would have to approve the subpoena before the IG could issue it. The second review would be conducted by the Attorney General, who would have the opportunity to block a subpoena if it would interfere with an ongoing investigation.

The bill attempts to strike a careful balance in granting IGs the authority to interview witnesses outside of the government while also providing these important checks against potential abuse.

I believe the bill should be further limited to only allow subpoenas of former federal employees and recipients of federal funds. In 2010, the Washington Post Editorial board advocated that testimonial subpoena authority for Inspectors General be tailored in this way. I would ask the Chairman that the editorial be placed in the record.

I will not offer an amendment today on this point, but I hope the Chairman will consider making that change as the bill moves to the House floor.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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