

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

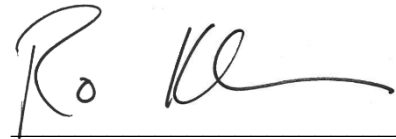
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



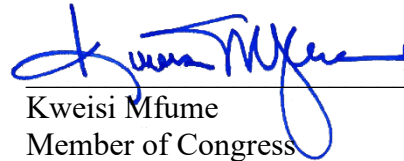
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



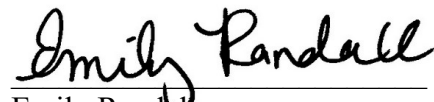
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



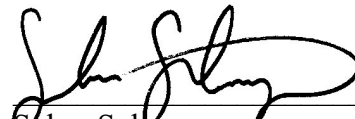
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



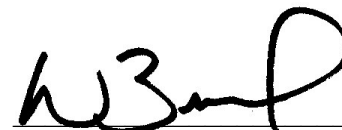
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



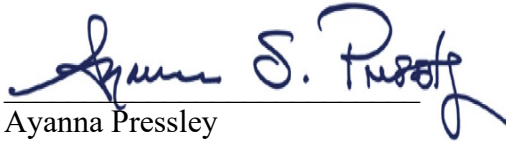
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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MINORITY (202) 225-6051

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August 15, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

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¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

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⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

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Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

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On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

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¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

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²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

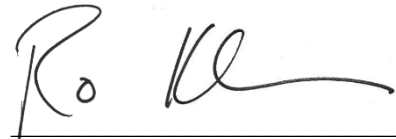
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



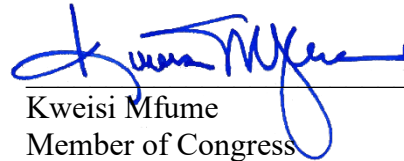
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
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Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



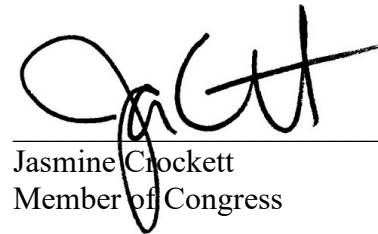
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



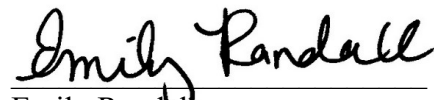
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



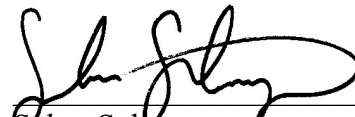
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



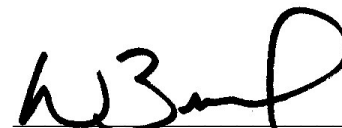
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



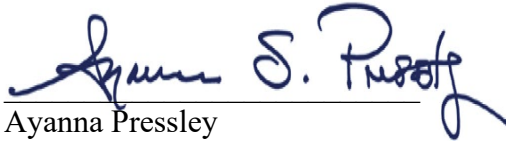
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

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²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

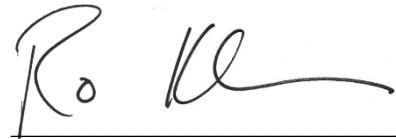
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



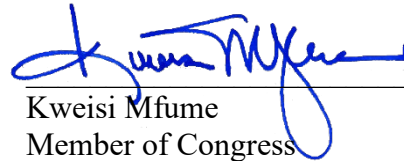
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



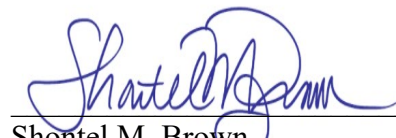
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



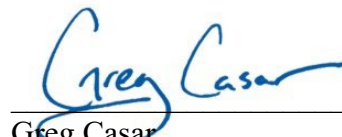
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



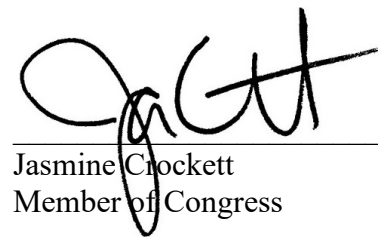
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



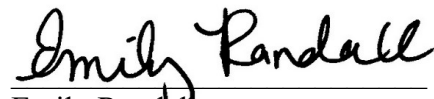
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



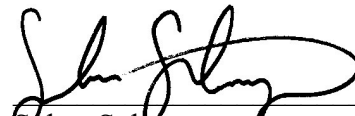
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



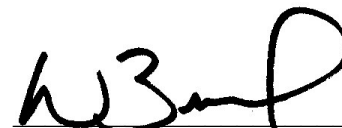
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



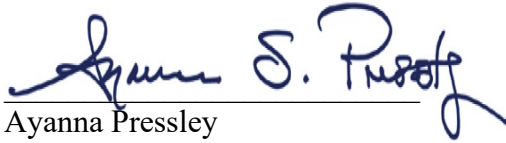
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Wright:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

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General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

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- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

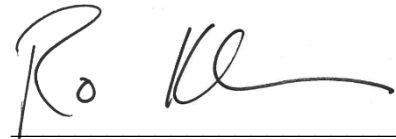
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



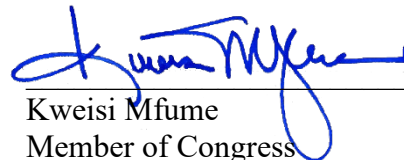
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



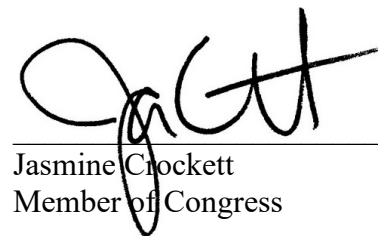
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



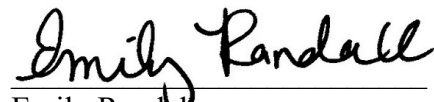
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



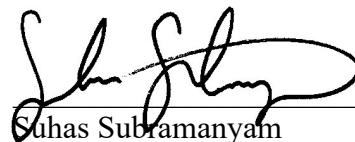
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



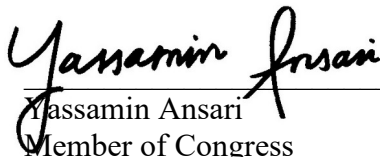
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



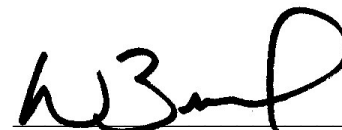
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



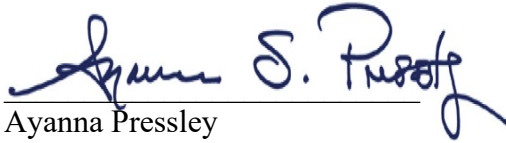
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lateefah Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Min". The signature is stylized, with a large "D" and a cursive "M".

Dave Min
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ayanna S. Pressley". The signature is cursive and includes the middle initial "S.". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rashida Tlaib". The signature is cursive and includes a dot over the "i" in "Tlaib". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

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Politicization of Inspectors General

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- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

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Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

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Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

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Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

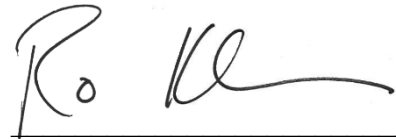
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



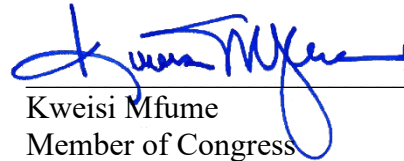
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
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Kweisi Mfume
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Shontel M. Brown
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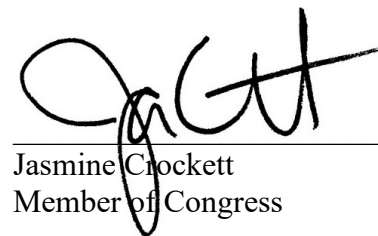
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
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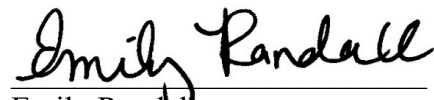
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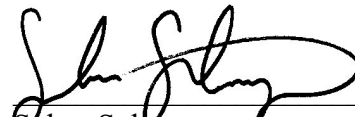
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



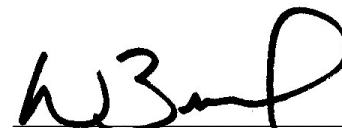
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



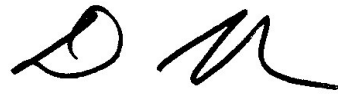
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



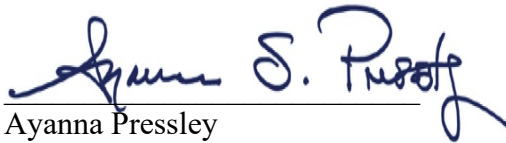
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member




Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

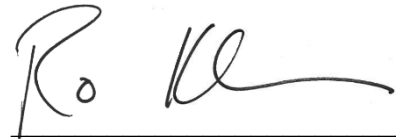
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



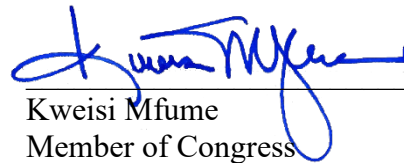
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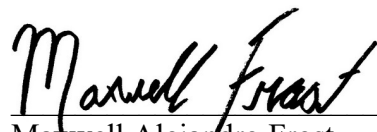
Kweisi Mfume
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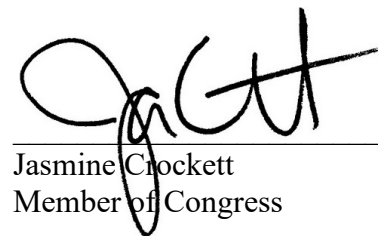
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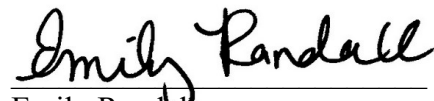
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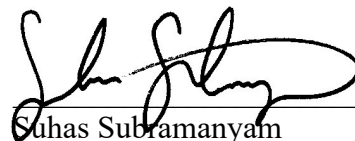
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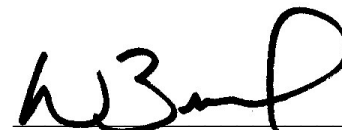
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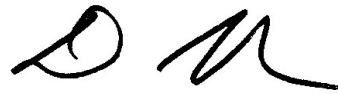
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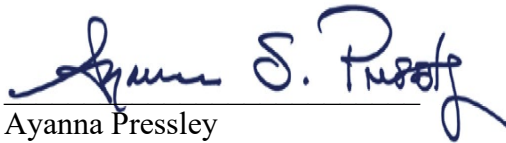
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Congress of the United States

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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MINORITY (202) 225-6051

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August 15, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeRemer:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

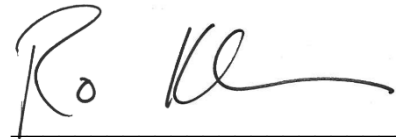
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



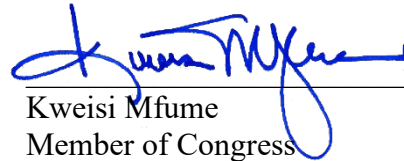
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



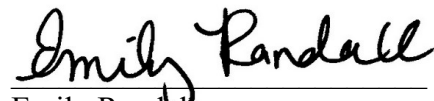
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



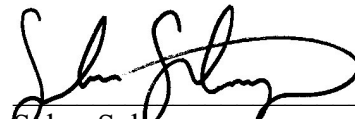
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



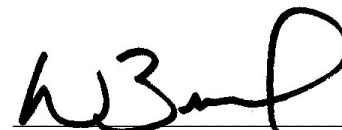
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



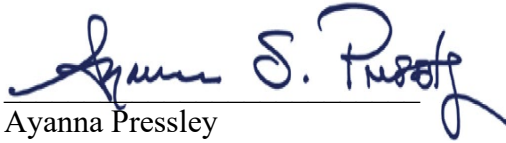
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

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⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

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⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

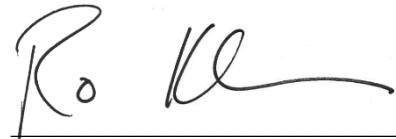
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



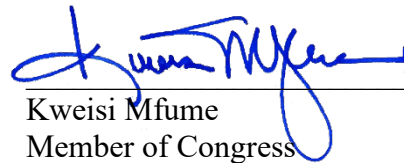
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



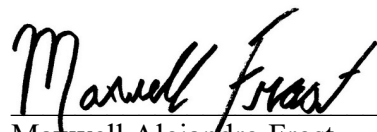
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



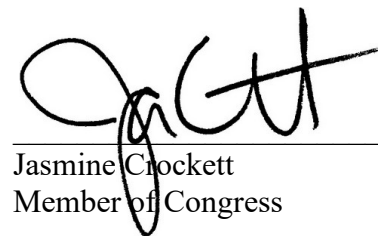
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



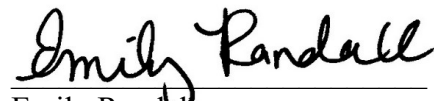
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



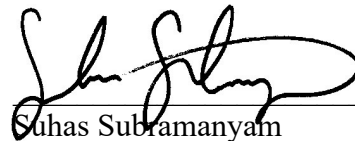
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



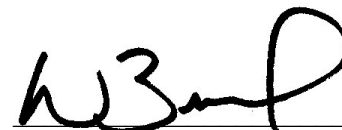
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



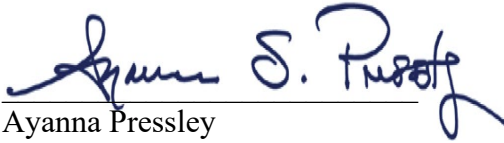
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary
Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

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¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

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Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

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Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

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²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

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²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

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Politicization of Inspectors General

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- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

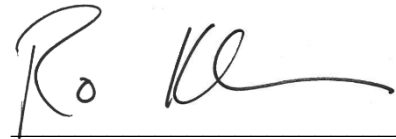
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



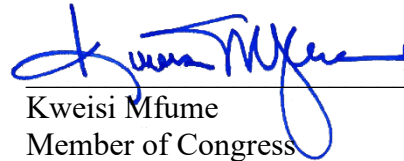
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



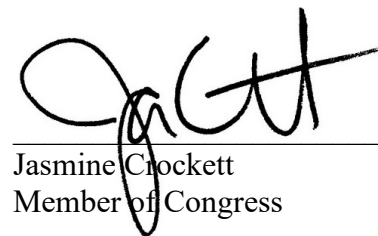
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



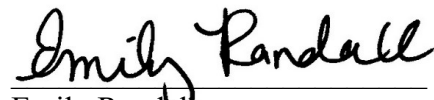
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



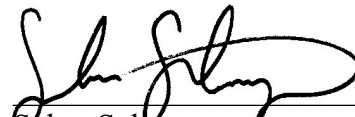
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



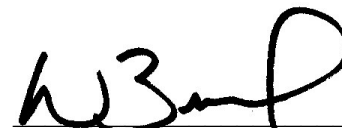
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



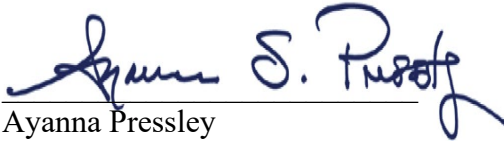
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

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²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

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Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

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Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

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Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



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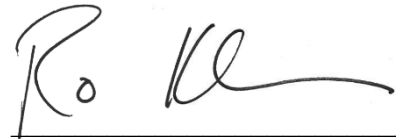
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



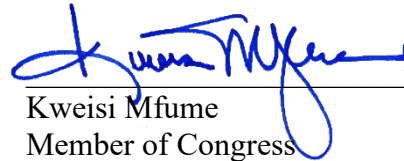
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



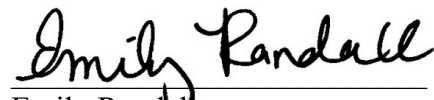
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



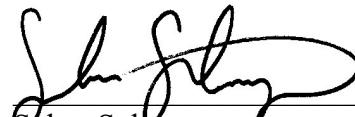
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



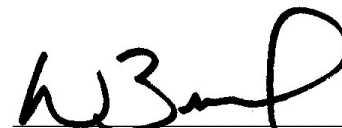
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



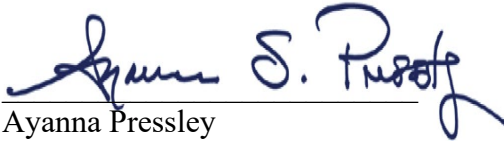
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

Mr. Michael Rigas
Acting Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Acting Administrator Rigas:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

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³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

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Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member




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(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).

Mr. Michael Rigas

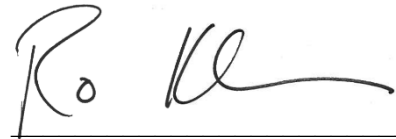
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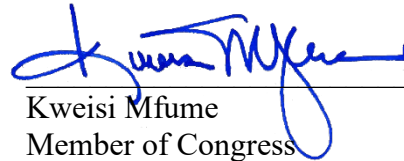
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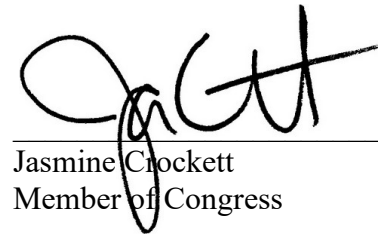
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



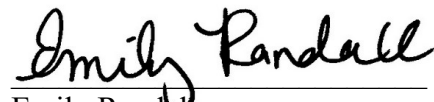
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



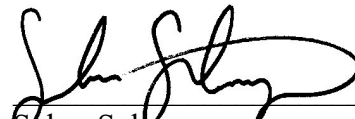
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



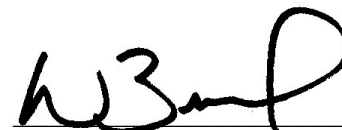
Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress




Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress

Mr. Michael Rigas

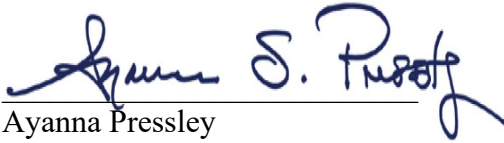
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Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

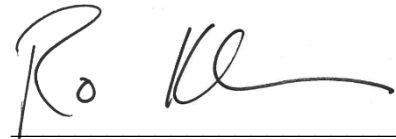
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



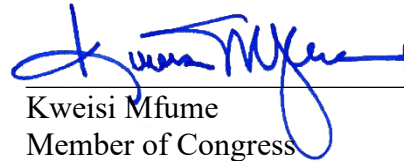
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



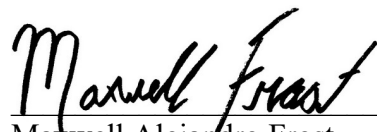
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
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Melanie Stansbury
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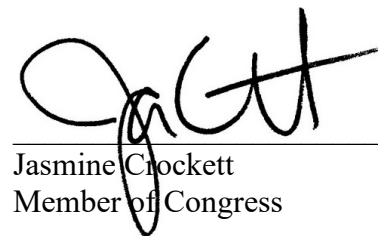
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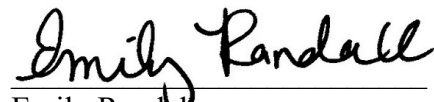
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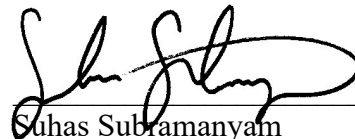
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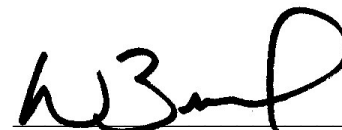
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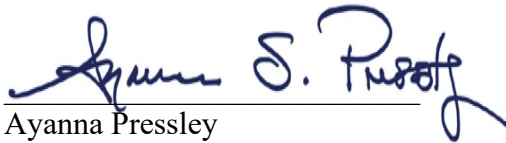
Wesley Bell
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Lateefah Simon
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Dave Min
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Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

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Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

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¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

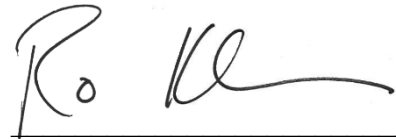
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



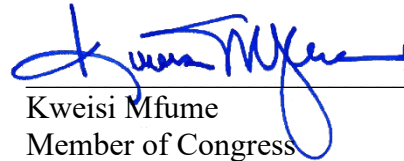
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



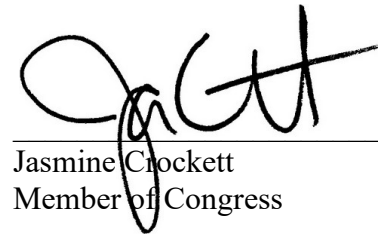
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



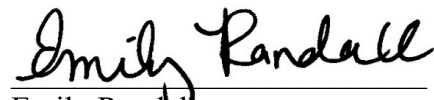
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



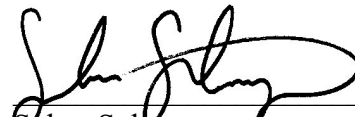
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



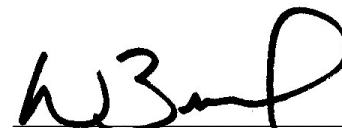
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



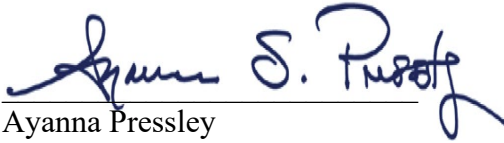
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Acting Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Acting Administrator Duffy:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

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Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

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⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

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Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

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The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

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2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member




Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

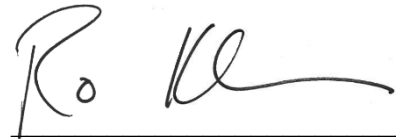
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



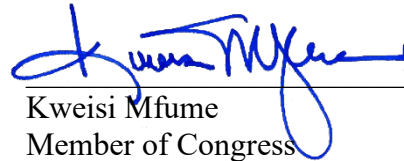
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



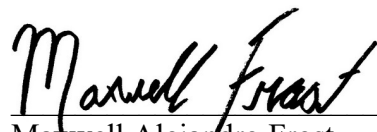
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



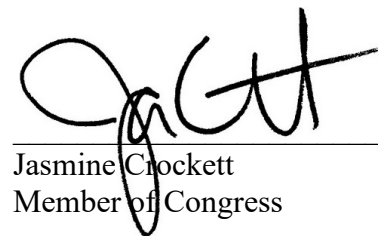
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



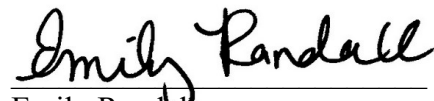
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



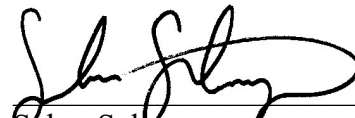
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



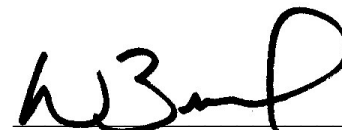
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



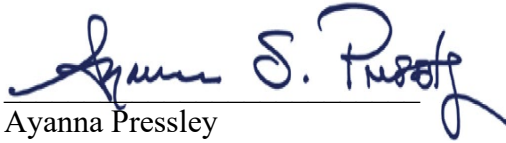
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable David A. Wright
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chairman Wright:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

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Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

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General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

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Politicization of Inspectors General

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- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

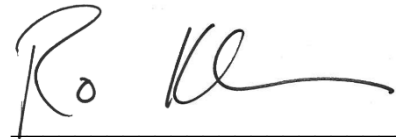
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



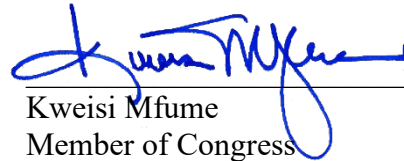
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



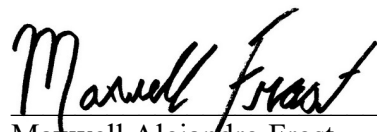
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



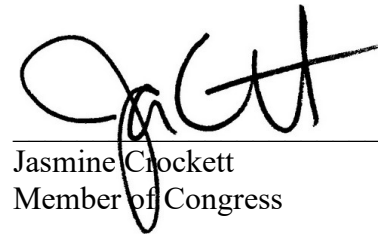
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



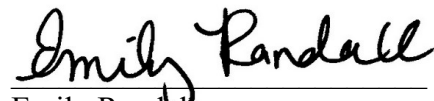
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



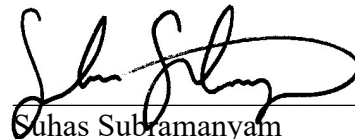
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



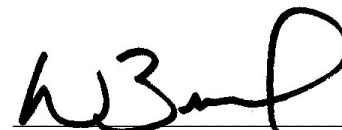
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



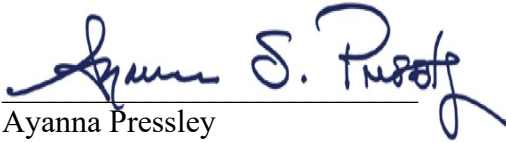
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

Mr. Brian Stone
Chief of Staff Performing the Duties of the Director
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Stone:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

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²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

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²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

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Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

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Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

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Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



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Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

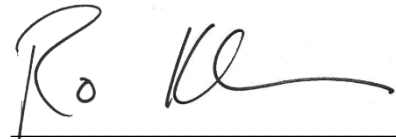
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



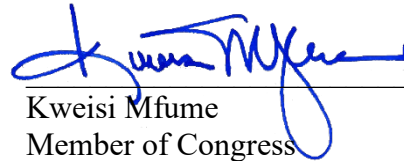
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Ro Khanna
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Kweisi Mfume
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Shontel M. Brown
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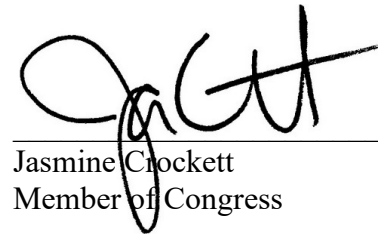
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



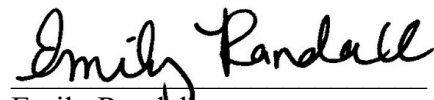
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



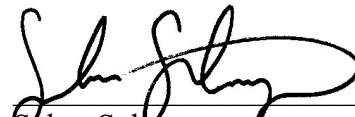
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



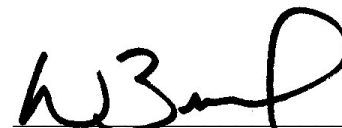
Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress




Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress

Mr. Brian Stone

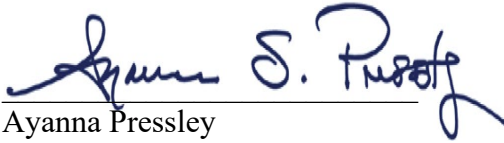
Page 9



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Scott Kuper
Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Director Kuper:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

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Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
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(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

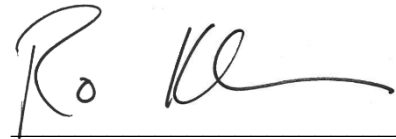
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



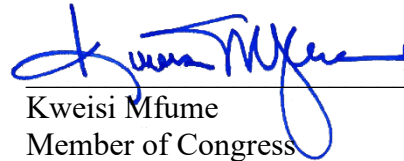
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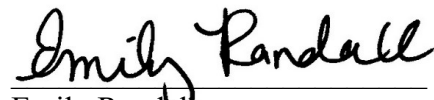
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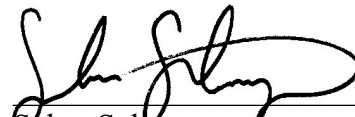
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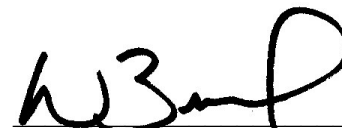
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



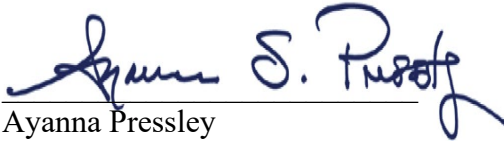
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Kelly Loeffler
Administrator
Small Business Administration
409 3rd Street, SW
Washington, DC 20416

Dear Administrator Loeffler:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

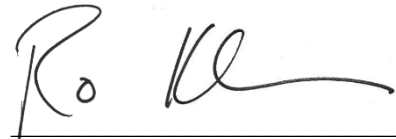
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



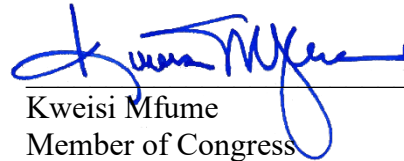
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
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Shontel M. Brown
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Melanie Stansbury
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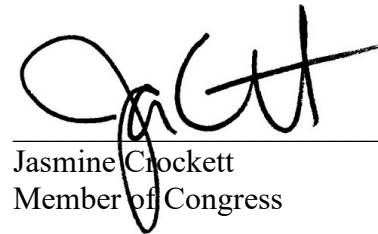
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



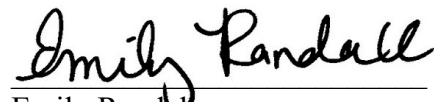
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



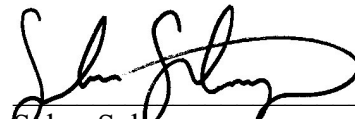
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



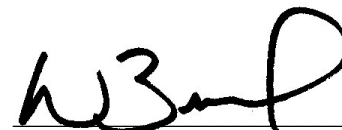
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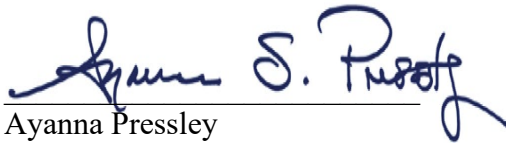
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Rashida Tlaib
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cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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August 15, 2025

The Honorable Frank Bisagnano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
1300 D Street, SW
Washington, DC 20254

Dear Commissioner Bisagnano:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

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Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

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⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

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The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

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¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

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Trump's illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

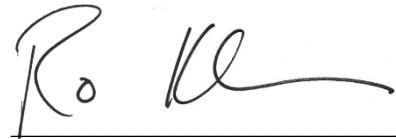
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



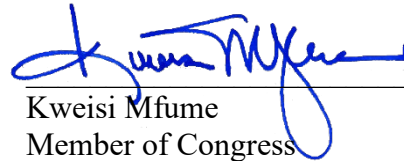
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



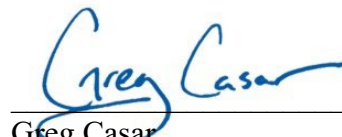
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



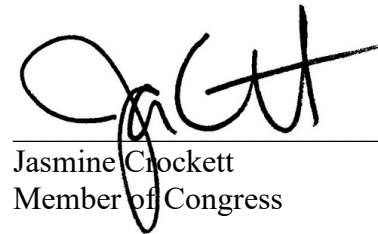
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



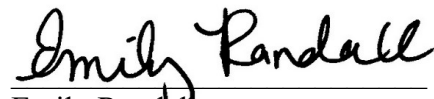
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



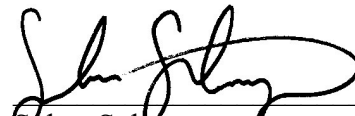
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



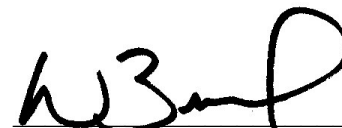
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



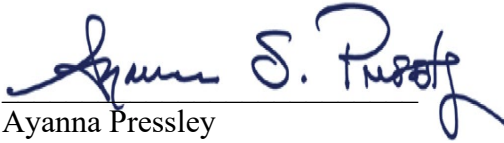
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

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¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

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On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

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¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

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2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

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²⁶ *Id.*

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²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

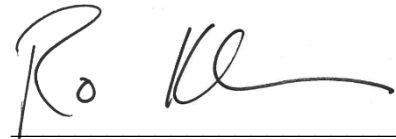
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



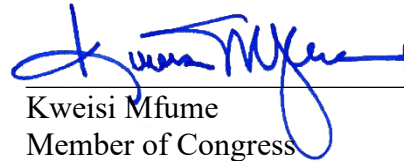
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



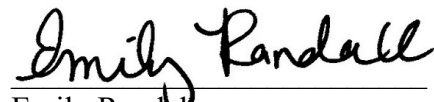
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



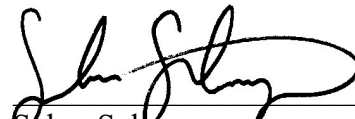
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



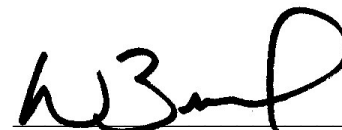
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



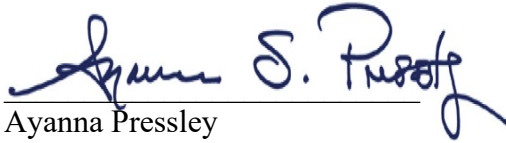
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Bessent:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

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¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

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²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

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²⁶ *Id.*

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²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

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- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
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Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

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Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



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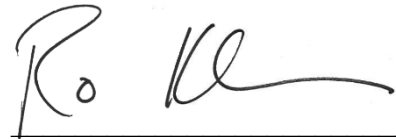
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



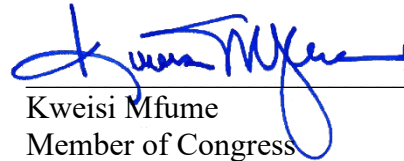
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



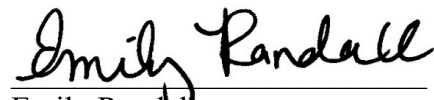
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



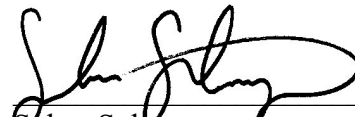
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



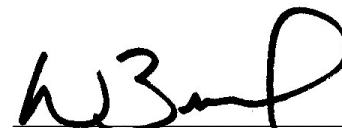
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



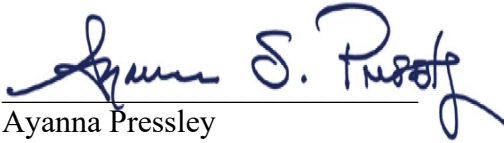
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Acting Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Acting Administrator Rubio:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

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³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

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Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
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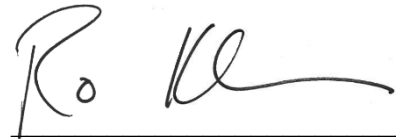
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



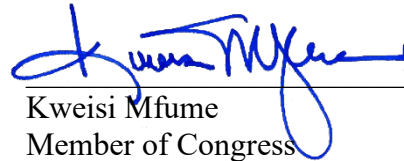
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Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



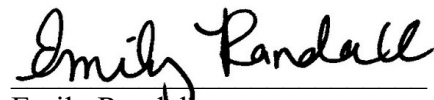
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



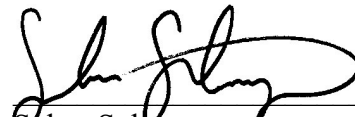
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



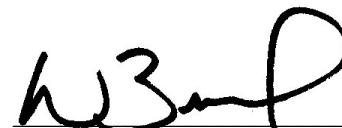
Emily Randall
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Suhas Subramanyam
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Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



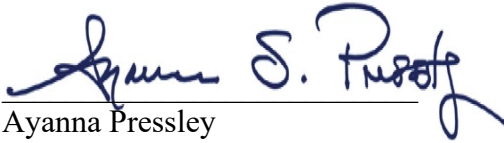
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051

<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorsgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

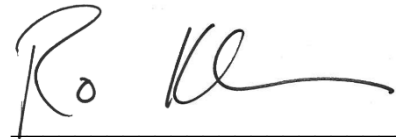
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



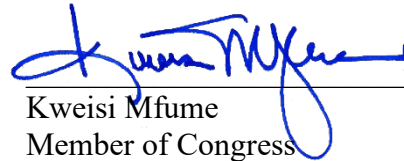
Stephen F. Lynch
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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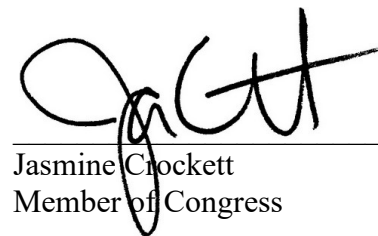
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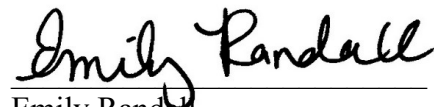
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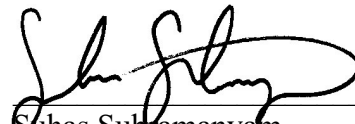
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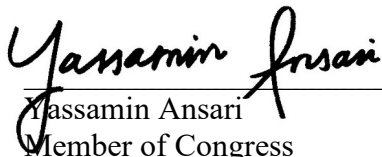
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



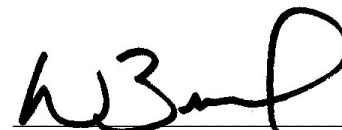
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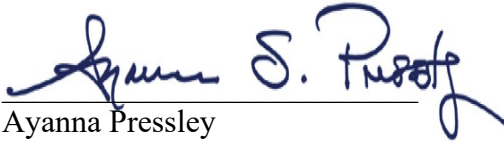
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Rashida Tlaib
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cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

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House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 15, 2025

The Honorable Doug A. Collins
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins:

We write with urgent concern and growing evidence that the Trump Administration is evading essential oversight safeguards designed to ensure that the federal government is working for the American people. Oversight Committee Democrats have been investigating President Trump's systematic crippling of inspectors general (IG)—the independent, nonpartisan watchdogs that uncover waste, fraud, and abuse and ensure that the government operates efficiently and effectively. Our review has obtained new information that the Administration is starving IGs of the resources they need to root out corruption and hold power accountable, despite the President's assurances to the public that addressing waste, fraud, and abuse is a high priority. Given the Administration's unprecedented assault on IGs, we underscore your statutory obligation to respect the independence and mission of federal IGs, including by ensuring timely responsiveness to all Office of Inspector General (OIG) requests and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. We also request written assurance of your commitment to this obligation.¹

Unlike the Trump Administration's failed DOGE effort, OIGs are the *actual* departments of government efficiency that are tasked with—and have an extensive track record of—identifying corruption, fraud, and waste in our government.² For almost half a century, they have saved taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars in recovered costs and future savings by shining a light on fraud, misconduct, inefficiency, and other waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars.³ They enforce law and order for those in power and fight those looking to cheat, steal, or abuse the trust of the American people. IGs are fiercely independent and work across presidential

¹ Oversight.gov, *Inspectors General: Mission* (online at www.oversight.gov/about/inspectors-general) (accessed July 28, 2025).

² *DOGE Says It Has Saved \$160 Billion. Those Cuts Have Cost Taxpayers \$135 Billion, One Analysis Says*, CBS News (Apr. 28, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-cost-135-billion-analysis-elon-musk-department-of-government-efficiency/).

³ Minority Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse* (May 2025) (online at www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf).

administrations.⁴ In fiscal year 2024, OIGs were able to deliver an \$18 return on every taxpayer dollar they spent.⁵

Committee Democrats have learned that, as a result of the Trump Administration's reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs without assessing the potential harm to the American people, the federal government's OIGs have lost hundreds of key personnel, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption.⁶ The Trump Administration has also placed hiring freezes on federal agencies—including OIGs—and directed them to undertake mass reduction in force (RIF) initiatives, threatening to make these challenges worse.⁷

The Trump Administration's actions have both deprived OIGs of the personnel and resources they need to examine and address waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government, and limited agencies' ability to respond to OIG requests.⁸ Numerous OIGs have reported to Committee staff about alterations of work schedules, delays in agency responses to OIG requests, and recruitment and retention issues. One OIG office feared that it "could experience delays in the future due to staff reductions resulting from the hiring freeze, meeting EO compliance, Deferred Resignation Program, and any future RIF requirements."⁹ Another OIG reported the loss of 20% of its staff since the start of fiscal year 2024 to the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), early retirement and separation incentives, and other attrition, which is its "lowest known staffing level based on historical data."¹⁰ That OIG noted that "[l]eadership in our Technology Services has been decimated as a result of the DRP and VERA." It continued, "as the largest office within the OIG, the largest number of staff departures from the OIG have been experienced auditors, including several senior Audit Services staff." That OIG is now "operating

⁴ *Opinion: They Were the Watchdogs*, New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/06/opinion/trump-doge-fires-inspectors-general.html).

⁵ Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Annual Report to the President and Congress for Fiscal Year 2024* (online at www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf).

⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html). At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout/>); Communications with Committee Democratic staff.

⁷ The White House, *Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Workforce Optimization Initiative* (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/).

⁸ See Communications with Committee Democratic staff; *The Federal Work Force Cuts So Far, Agency by Agency*, New York Times (updated May 12, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html).

⁹ Email from Staff, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 4, 2025).

¹⁰ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

with the fewest number of auditors in decades.”¹¹ When the deferred retirements processing is completed on September 30, 2025, one OIG expects to employ nearly 16% fewer personnel than in 2020.¹² Another OIG expects to employ 31% fewer personnel than in 2024 thanks to increased separations through the Deferred Resignation Program.¹³ It is clear that some of OIGs’ critical functions have been seriously impacted by the shortages and staffing challenges.¹⁴

The loss of experienced auditors, investigators, and other key staff, and simultaneous loss of timely access to agency information, risk creating a significant knowledge gap within each OIG—blind spots where investigative timelines are delayed, backlogs of pending cases grow, and agency fraud, waste, and abuse can go unchecked. This evidence builds on other egregious Trump Administration actions against IG independence and effectiveness, demonstrating an extensive pattern of effort to dismantle oversight and evade accountability to the American public.

Purge of Inspectors General

On January 24, 2025, more than a dozen IGs received an email informing them that “due to changing priorities” their position was “terminated, effective immediately.”¹⁵ The *Inspector General Act of 1978* (IG Act), amended in 2022, requires the President to communicate to Congress 30 days prior to removal or transfer of an IG and provide “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons” for the action.¹⁶ The emails communicating the President’s termination to these IGs failed to provide the required notice and a specific rationale, as required by law, and President Trump failed to provide Congress the 30-day notice of such removals.

More troublingly, on February 11, 2025, President Trump terminated the IG of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Paul Martin, just one day after the office released a report documenting the harmful and wasteful effects of the Trump Administration’s actions, raising concerns that the dismissal was politically motivated and designed to suppress independent assessments of Administration policies.¹⁷ President

¹¹ Email from Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 9, 2025).

¹² Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, Response to Committee Staff (May 14, 2025); Email from Staff, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹³ Email from Staff, Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General, to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 8, 2025).

¹⁴ See Communications with Staff, Chief Financial Officers Act Office of Inspector General, and Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (July 29, 2025).

¹⁵ *Trump Fires At Least 12 Inspectors General in Late-Night Purge*, New York Times (Jan. 24, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/us/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general.html).

¹⁶ Pub. L. No. 117-263 (2022).

¹⁷ *Trump Fires USAID Inspector General One Day After Blistering Report*, Washington Post (Feb. 11, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general/). See also U.S. Agency for International Development, *Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming*

Trump’s illegal termination came without warning and without any legitimate rationale for the firing—another violation of the law.

On June 5, 2025, President Trump ordered the removal of the Acting IG of the Department of Education (ED) by designating a Senior Special Agent from the Office of the Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System as the new Acting ED IG.¹⁸ This designation from the President came shortly after ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had “interfere[ed] with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review” of ED’s recent staffing and operations changes.¹⁹

Obstruction of Inspectors General Access and Duties

Under the Trump Administration, executive branch agencies have taken actions that appear to intentionally stymie the work and independence of OIGs.

On May 23, 2025, ED OIG notified Congressional committees that ED had withheld numerous documents requested by the OIG based on vague claims that the materials are somehow sensitive, deliberative, or related to unspecified litigation.²⁰ This is a clear violation of the IG Act, which authorizes the OIG “to have timely access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other materials available” related to ED’s “programs and operations.” Further, the IG Act bars any agency from withholding information from the OIG on the basis of deliberative information or information subject to litigation.²¹

The ED OIG also reported that ED cancelled all of the OIG’s scheduled interviews with Department staff without notice and instead insisted on ED Office of General Counsel (OGC) presence in every interview—a serious break with precedent and an escalation that undermines the OIG’s ability to properly root out waste, fraud, and abuse.²² As stated in a bicameral June 3,

Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance (Feb. 10, 2025) (online at <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>).

¹⁸ Congress.gov, *Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education—Message from the President of the United States* (H. DOC. NO. 119-58) *Congressional Record Vol. 171, No. 96* (June 5, 2025) (online at www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-171/issue-96/house-section/article/H2482-4). Ms. Semann’s first date of service as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education Office of Inspector General was July 7, 2025. Department of Education Office of Inspector General, *Submission Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act* (July 7, 2025).

¹⁹ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf). See also Department of Education, *U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force* (Mar. 11, 2025) (online at www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force).

²⁰ Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²¹ 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(A) and 5 U.S.C. § 406(a)(1)(B).

²² Letter from Rene L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, Department of Education Office of Inspector

2025, letter from Democratic leadership of relevant committees of jurisdiction, we understand “that such interviews are always conducted without OGC staff present, and this would be an unjustified departure from longstanding practice.”²³ Although ED asserts that it looks forward to a “collaborative engagement [with ED OIG], to include the provision of information and materials pertinent to a given audit, inspection, evaluation, or investigation,” as of July 1, 2025, ED OIG has still not received all requested documents or access to personnel from ED for its engagement related to changes in ED staffing and operations.²⁴

Efforts to undermine IGs may also impact national security and oversight of national security-related matters. On May 30, 2025, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) notified the Committee that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) inserted itself into the operations of its IG by appointing a senior advisor to the Intelligence Community (IC) IG, creating “significant independence issues” for the office.²⁵ The senior advisor purportedly sits in IC IG offices and attends IC IG meetings but reports to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. The Committee also learned that, in May 2025, ODNI placed the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel on involuntary administrative leave as she was working to address independence issues between ODNI and the IC IG. We further understand that ODNI intended for this newly appointed senior advisor to assume the duties previously held by the IC IG’s Acting General Counsel.²⁶

Federal law empowers the IC IG to “select, appoint, and employ such officers and employees as may be necessary to carry out the functions, powers, and duties of the Inspector General” and that the IC IG “has final approval of—the selection of all candidates for employment” at the IC IG.²⁷ Federal statute also prescribes the IC IG, not the director, with authority to “appoint a Counsel to the Inspector General who shall report to the Inspector General.”²⁸ Director Gabbard’s appointment of a purportedly highly partisan advocate in a senior role within the IC IG, and one who apparently reports to Director Gabbard directly rather than to the IG, clearly violates the sensitivity of the ongoing work and independence of the IC IG.²⁹

General, to Chairman Tim Walberg, Committee on Education & Workforce, et al. (May 23, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf).

²³ Letter from Acting Ranking Member Stephen F. Lynch, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, et al. to The Honorable Linda McMahon, Department of Education (June 2, 2025) (online at https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_letter_to_secmmcmahonreedoig.pdf).

²⁴ Letter from Sarah Ursprung, Department of Education, to The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch (June 26, 2025); Meeting with Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Staff, Department of Education Office of Inspector General (July 1, 2025).

²⁵ Email from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (May 30, 2025); Briefing from Staff, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to Democratic Staff, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (June 2, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(2)(A) and 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (j)(3).

²⁸ 50 U.S.C. § 3033 (i)(1)(A).

²⁹ The individual named as “senior advisor” to the IC IG, Dennis Kirk, coauthored a chapter on central personnel agencies for The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 and was reportedly involved with the first Trump

Politicization of Inspectors General

IGs must have the courage and independence to hold their agencies accountable and to deliver for the American people. By law, they must be watchdogs, not lapdogs. Roughly half of the 74 federal IGs require presidential nomination. Since firing 18 IGs across 19 agencies, President Trump has nominated nine replacements.³⁰ These choices to fill the vacated IG positions make clear that the President's focus is on blind loyalty and obedience to himself rather than on substantive qualifications. Trump's replacements for the illegally fired IGs include:

- Thomas March Bell, nominated as IG for the Department of Health and Human Services, who was forced to resign from his previous position in Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality for mishandling thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds and for attempting to devise a "deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee."³¹ This raises serious concerns about Bell's fitness to perform the statutory requirements of the position with any credibility and free from malicious intent.
- Anthony D'Esposito, nominated as IG for the Department of Labor, was subject to calls for an ethics investigation after reportedly putting "his fiancée's daughter as well as a woman with whom he was having an affair" on his payroll while serving as a Republican Member of Congress.³² This is an apparent violation of 5 U.S.C. § 403(a), which requires consideration of an IG nominee "without regard to their political affiliation" and "solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations".³³

Because of their critical oversight function, IGs must adhere to exceptionally high ethical standards.³⁴ The integrity of IGs is fundamental to maintaining credibility with the agency they

Administration's adoption of Schedule F. *The Many Links Between Project 2025 and Trump's World*, New York Times (Oct. 22, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/10/22/us/politics/project-2025-trump-heritage-foundation.html); The Heritage Foundation, *Project 2025 Publishes Comprehensive Policy Guide, "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise"* (Apr. 21, 2023) (online at https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf).

³⁰ President Trump's IG nominations include: Platte Moring (for DOD OIG); Thomas Bell (for HHS OIG); Anthony D'Esposito (for DOL OIG); Cheryl Mason (for VA OIG); William Kirk (for SBA OIG); Peter Thomson (for CIA IG); Christopher Fox (for Inspector General of the Intelligence Community); Jeremy Ellis (for HUD OIG); John Walk (USDA OIG). Partnership for Public Service, *Political Appointee Tracker* (online at <https://ourpublicservice.org/performance-measures/political-appointee-tracker/>) (accessed July 28, 2025).

³¹ *Trump Nominates Republican Once Accused of Mishandling Taxpayer Funds as HHS Watchdog*, Associated Press (March 25, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>); *DEQ Deputy Ousted After Repot*, The Daily Press (June 18, 1997) (online at www.dailypress.com/1997/06/18/deq-deputy-ousted-after-report/).

³² *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, New York Times (Sept. 23, 2024) (online at www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html).

³³ 5 U.S.C. § 403(a).

³⁴ See Association of Inspectors General, *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*

oversee, with Congress, and with the American people.³⁵ President Trump's nominations infringe upon these standards.

Oversight Committee Democrats Request for Information

When the integrity or capabilities of an agency's OIG are compromised, it weakens the agency's ability to be more efficient and accountable to the taxpayer. Moreover, actions to shrink the OIG community, install political hacks, and restrict lawful access to information ultimately chill whistleblower reporting, weaken independent oversight, and betray the public's trust. The independence and integrity of OIGs are critical to meet their missions, and they are also uniquely essential to your agency's overall mission. Your goals should be shared: providing the most efficient, ethical, and effective delivery of service for the American people.

Congress and the American people rely on IGs to remain steadfast in their pursuit of truth without regard to political affiliation. As such, and given the Trump Administration's alarming record to date, we stress your statutory obligation to respect OIG independence and to provide timely compliance with all OIG requests, including unfettered access to requested data, information, and people, and full cooperation in all audits, reviews, and investigations. Anything less conveys an intention to withhold information that is vital to protecting the public interest. To demonstrate your intent to honor these responsibilities to the American people, please provide a response no later than August 29, 2025, to clarify how you will dutifully uphold our nation's federal oversight and IG laws.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,




Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

(effective July 1, 2024) (online at www.inspectorgeneral.org/files/2023/10/AIG-Principles-and-Standards-Effective-7.1.2024.pdf).

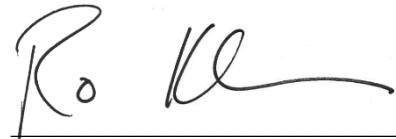
³⁵ See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Government Operations, *Press Release: At Subcommittee Hearing, Democrats Highlight Importance of Maintaining Independence of Inspectors General* (July 25, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/news/press-releases/subcommittee-hearing-democrats-highlight-importance-maintaining-independence>).



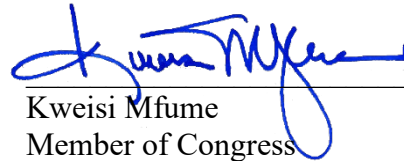
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



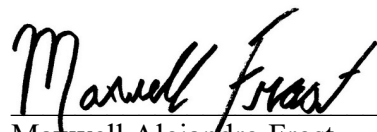
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



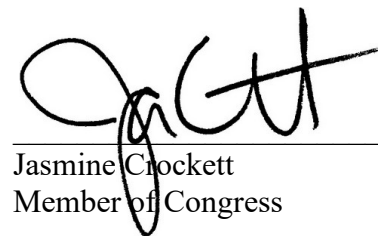
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



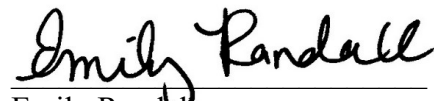
Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



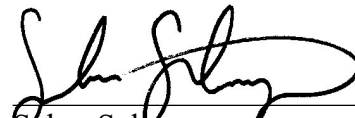
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



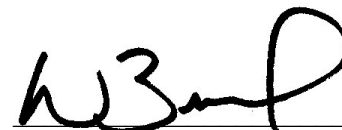
Emily Randall
Member of Congress




Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



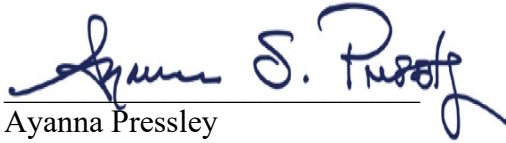
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman