

Subcommittee on Government Operations 116th Congress Accomplishments

The Subcommittee on Government Operations, led by Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, worked to defend against the Trump Administration's attacks on federal employees, whistleblowers, and inspectors general. The Subcommittee launched multiple investigations and held hearings to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in the public sector while protecting the rights of federal employees. The Subcommittee also continued to build a robust infrastructure for federal information technology (IT) procurement and use to improve how government delivers services to the nation.

PREVENTED ELIMINATION OF OPM

Trump Administration Action: President Trump's fiscal year 2020 budget, released in March 2019, indicated that he planned to eliminate the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM is the federal government's principal human resources agency, administering healthcare, insurance, and retirement benefits for millions of federal workers and their families.

Subcommittee Action: Chairman Connolly objected to this plan and requested documents on the Administration's proposal on [March 22, 2019](#). The Subcommittee continued to press the Administration to fully comply with its investigation, sending additional letters on [May 8, 2019](#), and [July 15, 2019](#). Chairman Connolly held hearings with [OPM Acting Director Margaret Weichert](#) and [other Administration officials](#), pressing for documents related to this proposal. At the hearings, Members asked specifically about any legal analyses for the reorganization proposal, but the Administration refused to answer or offered misleading responses. It was later revealed that the White House failed to disclose a [phone call](#) from April 2019 during which the head of the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel told agency officials they did not have authority to dismantle this agency.

Accomplishment: The Subcommittee's investigation and significant bipartisan outrage forced President Trump to [announce](#) that he would abandon his proposal to abolish OPM.

SAVED POSTAL SERVICE FROM BANKRUPTCY DURING PANDEMIC

Trump Administration Action: In March, the United States Postal Service said it was on the brink of bankruptcy due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Subcommittee Action: Chairman Connolly worked to ensure that the Postal Service received the funding and support it needed to continue to operate on behalf of the American people during the coronavirus pandemic. He [introduced legislation](#) after numerous briefings warning of disaster, and he wrote multiple letters to [leadership urging](#) them to include funding in the stimulus package.

Accomplishment: Chairman Connolly fought for emergency appropriations to the Postal Service to be included in the CARES Act. While the initial version of the bill included \$25 billion, the final version gave the Postal Service the ability to borrow \$10 billion.

PROTECTED INDEPENDENCE OF POSTAL SERVICE

Trump Administration Action: President Trump’s Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, sabotaged the United States Postal Service by [implementing](#) organizational and operational changes during the coronavirus pandemic that caused significant delays across the country weeks before the 2020 election.

Subcommittee Action: Chairman Connolly, along with other Chairs and Members of the Committee, sent a [letter](#) to Postmaster General DeJoy seeking information on internal Postal Service documents that outlined drastic changes to the Postal Service. After significant public outrage and news reports of significant delays in the mail, the Committee [summoned](#) the Postmaster General to appear at a urgent hearing in August, and he [agreed](#).

Accomplishment: A bicameral [request](#) from Chairman Connolly, Chairwoman Maloney, and Senator Elizabeth Warren prompted a Postal Service inspector general investigation that [found](#) that Postmaster General DeJoy’s changes were implemented without careful examinations of the risks and consequences of these actions. Under Chairman Connolly’s questioning at the August [hearing](#), the Postmaster General reversed his testimony before the Senate denying any communications with the Trump campaign. He [admitted](#) he “spoke to people that are friends of mine that are associated with the campaign.” He was also later forced by the courts to reverse his operational changes at least until after the presidential election.

IMPROVED GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY

Trump Administration Action: The Administration’s 2019 Data Center Optimization Initiative (DCOI) guidance narrows the scope of what agencies consider a data center by revising several data center optimization metrics. Without a requirement to report on more than 2,000 data center facilities, oversight of cybersecurity vulnerabilities is diminished and opportunities to reduce taxpayer costs are reduced

Subcommittee Action: On June 26, 2019, December 11, 2019, and August 3, 2020, Chairman Connolly held the Subcommittee’s [eighth](#), [ninth](#), and [tenth](#) hearings on how federal agencies have developed and improved their information technology postures since the implementation of the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA). On July 17, 2019, Chairman Connolly also held a [hearing](#) to examine the security assessment of cloud technology in federal government IT modernization under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP).

Accomplishment: Under Chairman Connolly’s leadership, agencies’ average scores on FITARA implementation have risen from “D” to above a “C” since the first scorecard. The Subcommittee has also identified areas for improvement in the implementation of FedRAMP across agencies. The Office of Management and Budget has agreed to work with the Subcommittee to more effectively define what constitutes a data center to continue to protect online security and find ways to reduce federal costs.

STRENGTHENED WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS

Trump Administration Action: President Trump has repeatedly attempted to expose the identity of and attack federal employees who blow the whistle on waste, fraud, and abuse in the government.

Subcommittee Action: On January 28, 2020, Chairman Connolly held a [hearing](#) to examine who qualifies as a whistleblower and what protections whistleblowers are allotted. The Subcommittee heard from representatives from the Project on Government Oversight, the National Whistleblower Center and R Street, as well as officials from the Department of Defense and Department of Justice IG Offices. Witnesses confirmed whistleblowers' rights to remain anonymous be protected and the need for bipartisan support of such protections.

Accomplishment: Chairman Connolly introduced the Whistleblower Expansion Act of 2019. The bill would apply to subcontractors and subgrantees certain whistleblower protection provisions regarding contractor protection from reprisals. Chairman Connolly was also an original cosponsor of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 2020. This bill would prohibit federal officials from blocking federal employees from sharing information with Congress and add further protections against disclosure of a whistleblower's identity. The January hearing also became the underpinning for the Protecting Our Democracy Act, which is a collection of post-Trump reforms focused on eliminating the abuses of power of this Administration.

PROTECTED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS

Trump Administration Action: President Trump has consistently sought to undermine union activity and collective bargaining rights, issuing multiple executive orders that prevent federal employees from fully exercising their rights to collective bargaining in labor negotiations and grievance proceedings.

Subcommittee Action: On June 5, 2019, the Subcommittee held a [hearing](#) on federal labor-management relations after Federal Labor Relations Authority Chairman Colleen Duffy Kiko faced criticism for anti-union bias in her management of the agency. Chairman Connolly wrote letters to Chairman Kiko on [April 2, 2020](#), [April 17, 2020](#), and [November 30, 2020](#) as he continued to advocate for federal employees' rights to collective bargaining.

Accomplishment: Chairman Connolly and other Members of the Subcommittee found that Chairman Kiko demonstrated anti-union bias in her interpretation of legislation and that her interpretation differed from congressional intent. The Subcommittee's work creates a roadmap for the Biden Administration to undo the unprecedented damage of Chairman Kiko.

PREVENTED FBI RELOCATION PLAN

Trump Administration Action: President Trump [intervened directly](#) in the decision to not demolish the crumbling Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Headquarters and construct a new facility on the same site.

Subcommittee Action: On March 6, 2019, Chairman Connolly sent a [letter](#) with Chairman Elijah E. Cummings and three other Chairs demanding documents from the General Services Administration (GSA) about this decision. On May 17, 2019, Chairman Connolly sent a [letter](#) with the same Chairs requesting the Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General launch an investigation into the relocation cancellation and the updated plans for the FBI headquarters. On June 27, 2019, Chairman Connolly held a [hearing](#) to examine why the Office of Personnel Management, FBI, and GSA had failed to comply with several of the Committee’s requests for documents—including this investigation.

Accomplishment: Under questioning from Chairman Cummings, GSA Chief of Staff Robert Borden [testified](#) that he “didn’t see any reason why [GSA] wouldn’t be able turn over” certain critical communications that would shed light on the Administration’s abrupt decision to abandon the long-term plan to move the FBI headquarters to a suburban location. On July 3, 2019, the DOJ Inspector General [announced](#) they launched an [investigation](#) into the Administration’s political intervention into the FBI Headquarters, and soon found that the President met with GSA Administrator Emily Murphy to discuss the issue—despite her assertions that no such meeting ever occurred.

[INVESTIGATED RETALIATION AGAINST INSPECTORS GENERAL](#)

Trump Administration Action: President Trump launched a coordinated campaign of firing and replacing Inspectors General who were investigating allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Administration.

Subcommittee Activity:

- **Department of Transportation Inspector General:** Chairman Connolly sent a [letter](#) with other House Chairs opposing the removal of former Acting Inspector General Mitch Behm and the appointment of a new IG who currently holds dual roles by maintaining his position in the Department of Transportation reporting directly to Secretary Elaine Chao.
- **Department of State Inspector General:** Chairman Connolly wrote a [letter](#) with other House Chairs opposing the firing of former Inspector General Steve Linick, who was [investigating](#) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for misconduct.
- The Subcommittee held a series of [virtual briefings](#) with federal inspectors general to highlight their work and oversee their work on the pandemic.

Accomplishment: Under pressure from Chairman Connolly and the Committee, the State Department agreed to [transcribed interviews](#) regarding Inspector General Linick’s firing. Chairman Connolly introduced [key legislation](#) with fellow congressional leaders that will prevent future Presidents and administrations from taking politically motivated actions against nonpartisan, independent IGs who conduct oversight on behalf of the American people and their hard-earned tax dollars.

[PROTECTED FEDERAL WORKFORCE DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC](#)

Trump Administration Action: On April 20, 2020, the Trump Administration [issued](#) confusing and incomplete reopening procedures for the federal workforce during the coronavirus pandemic.

Subcommittee Action: On [April 29, 2020](#), and [May 15, 2020](#), Chairman Connolly wrote to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) raising concerns about the Administration's guidance and seeking briefings that the Administration refused to provide. Chairman Connolly also wrote [letters](#) to 24 federal Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs) requesting their plans to oversee agency plans for federal employees to return to their workplaces. In his letter to the Department of Defense (DOD) IG, Chairman Connolly also requested an investigation into the death of Chaicharn Suthammanont, a food service worker at the Quantico Marine Corps Base who died of coronavirus complications in late May. On June 25, 2020, Chairman Connolly held a [hearing](#) to examine the need for sufficient, evidence-based plans for reopening federal workplaces, and he introduced legislation to support and protect federal workers in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Accomplishment: The Subcommittee's work revealed that the Trump Administration's plans to reopen federal agencies were incomplete and jeopardized the health and safety of millions of federal workers. Chairman Connolly's legislation—[the Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act of 2020](#)—to protect federal workers during the pandemic passed the House of Representatives. Chairman Connolly also created a [Tracker](#) to allow Congress, federal employees, and the public to track the work of federal OIGs in reviewing agency plans to reopen federal offices.

TRUMP HOTEL RENT REDUCTIONS

Trump Administration Action: In April 2020, a new [report](#) alleged that the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. requested a rent reduction from its landlord, the GSA.

Subcommittee Action: On April 21, 2020, Chairman Connolly and Chairwoman Maloney released a [statement](#) demanding that GSA not grant rent deductions for the Trump Hotel—in direct violation of current law. On April 29, 2020, the Chairs sent a [letter](#) to the GSA requesting documents related to the report's findings. The report was only the latest development in the Committee's overall efforts to investigate the Trump Organization's relationship with the federal government, particularly regarding the Trump Hotel.

Accomplishment: The GSA issued guidance on May 6, 2020, that requires tenants to make any requests for rent relief in writing. The Trump Organization never made a written request and thus did not receive a break on its lease payments.

LEGISLATION AUTHORED BY CHAIRMAN CONNOLLY

PASSED HOUSE

- On September 30, 2020, the House passed the [Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act of 2020](#) to require federal agencies to develop and disclose reopening plans that incorporate certain information before sending employees back to work during a public health emergency.
- On January 30, 2019, the House passed the [Federal Civilian Workforce Pay Raise Fairness Act of 2019](#) to increase by 2.6% the rates of basic pay for federal civilian employees for 2019.

PASSED COMMITTEE

- On September 16, 2020, the Committee passed the bipartisan [Integrity Committee Transparency Act of 2019](#) to expand the membership of the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to include a former inspector general and revises requirements regarding the council's Integrity Committee.
- On December 19, 2019, the Committee passed the bipartisan [Restore the Partnership Act](#) to establish the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations of the United States to facilitate the fullest cooperation, coordination, and mutual accountability among all levels of government, and for other purposes.
- On June 12, 2019, the Committee passed the bipartisan [National Historical Publications and Records Commission Reauthorization Act of 2019](#) to reauthorize the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and allocate funding to the Commission.
- On June 12, 2019, the Committee passed the [Interim Stay Authority To Protect Whistleblowers Act](#) to authorize the general counsel of the Merit Systems Protection Board to temporarily act as a member of the board when dealing with matters related to the staying of certain personnel actions, and it authorizes a single member of the board to carry out certain board duties in the event of a lack of quorum.

SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

- On December 15, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the [Midnight Regulations Review Act](#) to provide oversight of midnight regulations finalized at the end of an administration and during the presidential transition period.
- On July 30, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the [Merit Systems Protection Board Empowerment Act of 2020](#) to reauthorize the Merit Systems Protection Board through FY2025 and modify certain requirements relating to the administration of cases involving whistleblowers.
- On July 1, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Telework for U.S. Innovation Act](#) to make permanent the Telework Enhancement Act Pilot Program in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

- On June 25, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the [Federal Workforce Health and Safety During the Pandemic Act](#) to provide additional benefits and flexibilities for federal employees during the coronavirus pandemic.
- On March 5, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the [Telework Metrics and Cost Savings Act](#) to require a federal agency's telework policy to include information on (1) annual goals for increasing the telework participation rate, and (2) methods for collecting data related to cost savings achieved through telework.
- On March 4, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Postal Supervisors and Managers Fairness Act of 2020](#) to modify procedures for negotiating pay and benefits of supervisory and other managerial personnel of the U.S. Postal Service.
- On January 28, 2020, Chairman Connolly introduced the [FAIR \(Federal Adjustment of Income Rates\) Act](#) to increase by 3.5% the rates of basic pay for federal employees under the statutory pay systems for calendar year 2021.
- On August 2, 2019, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Whistleblower Expansion Act of 2019](#) to grant subcontractors and subgrantees certain whistleblower protection provisions regarding contractor protection from reprisals.
- On February 14, 2019, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [First Responder Fair RETIRE \(Return for Employees on Their Initial Retirement Earned\) Act](#) to allow federal first responders with disabilities to continue receiving federal retirement benefits in the same manner as though they had not been disabled.
- On February 14, 2019, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Federal Firefighter Pay Equity Act](#) to adjust the method of determining the average pay of a federal firefighter for purposes of computing retirement and annuity benefits.
- On February 14, 2019, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Equal COLA Act](#) to revise the formula used to calculate the cost-of-living adjustment for annuities paid under the Federal Employees Retirement System.
- On January 16, 2019, Chairman Connolly introduced the bipartisan [Postal Employee Appeal Rights Amendments Act](#) to extend federal employee protections against adverse personnel actions, including the right to appeal such actions to the Merit Systems Protection Board, to additional categories of employees at the U.S. Postal Service.