

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2015

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to nominate a permanent inspector general for the Department of the Interior. The long-standing vacancy has reduced the Department's efficiency and deprived taxpayers from fully realizing the benefits of a strong inspector general, which is one of Congress's best investments of their tax dollars.¹

The federal government performs better when a robust group of independent watchdogs is in place to guard taxpayer dollars against waste, fraud, and mismanagement. With that in mind, Congress created independent and objective investigatory offices at 72 federal agencies, including the Department of the Interior, to promote efficiency and effectiveness. When these positions are vacant for extended periods of time, the office is weakened because temporary leadership is neither adequately independent nor well-positioned to make long-term decisions.

The Department's last permanent inspector general left on February 23, 2009—more than six years ago. Since then, the office has been managed by an acting inspector general whose tenure has been the subject of recent, significant congressional oversight and controversy.² Many acting inspectors perform admirably despite lacking the imprimatur of the Senate and the White House. Because acting inspectors general are inherently less independent than their permanent counterparts, however, stakeholders do not have full confidence that their work is credible. Additionally, some acting inspectors general are candidates for the permanent job, which creates an incentive to conduct less aggressive oversight of the administration. In any event, taxpayers suffer the consequences.

The amount of money at stake is significant. The Department of the Interior budget exceeds \$12 billion in fiscal year 2015.³ The Department's management of federal oil and gas resources has appeared on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List" since 2011.⁴ The Department is also facing a number of challenges related to energy management, information technology, and disaster response, among others.⁵ The Department would benefit from an inspector general empowered by the confirmation process as it addresses those management challenges.

¹ The inspector general community's aggregate budget is approximately \$2.5 billion. The potential savings identified by the community represent about a \$21 return on every dollar invested by Congress. Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, "Progress Report to the President, Fiscal Year 2013," at 2.

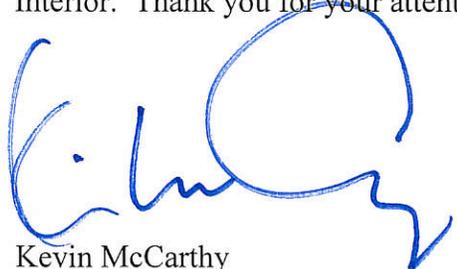
² See Staff of H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 113th Cong., Staff Report: "Holding Interior Watchdog Accountable" (Feb. 21, 2013); <http://naturalresources.house.gov/oversight/ig/>.

³ Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2015.

⁴ Gov't Accountability Office Report, "High Risk Series: An Update," GAO-15-290 (Feb. 2015).

⁵ Memorandum from Mary L. Kendall, Deputy Inspector General, Dep't of Interior, to Hon. Sally Jewell, Sec'y, Dep't of Interior (Oct. 20, 2014).

We respectfully request that you nominate an inspector general for the Department of the Interior. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform



Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Ken Calvert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Betty McCollum, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations