

Chairman Trey Gowdy Opening Statement
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
“Recommendations and Reforms from the Inspectors General”
Wednesday, November 15, 2017 at 10:00 am

When defending against waste, fraud and abuse, Inspectors General play a critical role within our federal agencies. While Congressional Oversight is essential, the 73 Inspectors General best understand their agencies issues and can clearly identify areas in need of reform.

In fiscal year 2015, IGs saved taxpayers roughly \$37 billion on a total budget of \$2.7 billion - which is a tremendous return on every dollar given to the IGs. In December 2016, the Inspectors General Empowerment Act was signed into law with bipartisan support. That was an effort led by Ranking Member Cummings and the gentleman from North Carolina Mr. Mark Meadows.

Designed to support and strengthen IG independence, the IG Empowerment Act ensures federal investigators have full and prompt access to all agency documents needed for the investigatory process. In addition, the Act streamlines investigative procedures, improves transparency by instituting new reporting requirements, and increases efficiency to IG operations. While the Act implemented much needed reforms, the IG community still has legislative priorities, which could strengthen oversight of federal programs and resolve challenges facing the Inspector General community.

The IG community is also currently facing the challenge of filling IG vacancies. Of the 73 IGs across the federal government, 14 positions remain vacant because either no nominee has been appointed or the appointed nominees still await Senate confirmation. For example, the Department of Interior has not appointed a permanent IG since 2009. Still, no nomination has been made to fill the position. In the case of the National Security Agency, which has been without a permanent leader since May 31, 2016, it has been 147 days since this administration announced a nominee on June 19, 2017.

The Administration has worked toward filling the vacancies by announcing intent to nominate or officially nominate individuals to fill vacancies, but these nominees still require a confirmation process. When a vacancy occurs in an IG office, the agency head appoints an acting IG. Those appointed often perform excellent work, but they are inherently less independent and less effective than one who is Senate-confirmed.

While the Senate and the administration are the key players in ensuring timely nominations and confirmations, the house will work with them to help speed appointments however and wherever we can.

The work of our Inspector Generals is too important for temporary leadership in the investigatory process. In order to ensure successful investigations, federal investigators must have access to information. Too often, IGs perform excellent oversight work, but they can't do it

fully if the individual retires or resigns, and removes them from the IG's jurisdiction. This leads to incomplete audits or closed investigations.

One solution is to grant IGs testimonial subpoena authority. This would allow an IG to subpoena witnesses as necessary when performing the functions of the IG Act. Leaving office would no longer allow a federal employee to avoid testifying about potential misconduct or frankly any fact pattern.

We look forward to working with our colleagues in the Minority and in the Senate to create a solution to grant IGs testimonial subpoena authority. I thank our witnesses again for their service to our country and for your appearance here today.