

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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December 5, 2023

Mr. Robert C. Erickson, Jr.
Acting Inspector General
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Acting Inspector General Erickson:

We write to request you investigate the site selection process that culminated in the November 9 announcement by the General Services Administration (GSA) that it selected Greenbelt, Maryland as the site of the new Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) headquarters.¹

Congress created GSA in 1949 to increase the efficiency and economy of federal government operations — not least the procurement and use of property.² To fulfill that mission, GSA must be fair and transparent in its operations. Its real estate dealings should consider only what is best for taxpayers and the Nation. It must set aside political or parochial interests.

We are deeply concerned that GSA's choice of a new FBI headquarters site departed from those principles—and in doing so, failed to put taxpayers and the public interest first.

With respect to the new FBI headquarters, GSA initially set out criteria for assessing potential sites, and a process for selecting among them. But it changed the rules in the middle of the game. The criteria were changed. The selection process itself was changed. Most disturbingly, a new umpire — a political appointee — was inserted in the final inning. That individual, Nina Albert, the Commissioner of the Public Building Service at GSA, overturned the unanimous site decision of an expert panel of civil servants representing GSA and its agency client, the FBI.

It's unsurprising, then, that the Administration's own FBI Director, Christopher Wray, called foul. In reaction to GSA's November 9 decision, he sent a message to FBI employees that stated, "Unfortunately, we have concerns about fairness and transparency in the process and GSA's failure to adhere to its own site selection plan." Wray's note also flagged his concern

¹ News Release, General Services Administration, GSA Selects Greenbelt, Maryland, for new FBI headquarters campus location (November 9, 2023).

² Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, Pub. L. 152, Ch. 288, 63 Stat 377.

about, “a potential conflict of interest involving the site selection authority and whether changes that individual made in the final stage of the process adhered to the site selection criteria.”³

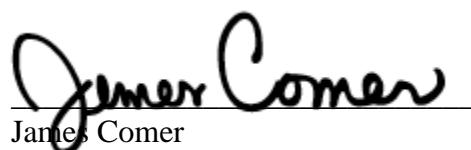
We ask that your investigation of the FBI headquarters site selection process include—along with any other issues you find appropriate—a full assessment of the following:

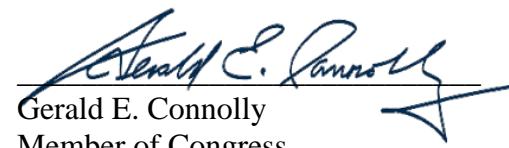
- The July 2023 decision by GSA to adjust the weighting originally accorded to specific assessment criteria;
- The decision that same month to substitute in the GSA Public Building Service Commissioner, Nina Albert, as the Site Selection Authority;
- The decision to insert Ms. Albert into this role despite her being a former employee of the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), the entity that owns the site she ultimately chose; and
- Ms. Albert’s decision, in rendering her verdict, to accord greater weight to certain sub criteria than others, contrary to the agreed upon process to accord equal weight to each sub criteria.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,


James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability


Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

³ Morgan Smith, CNBC and Frank Thorp V, FBI Director criticizes selection of new headquarters site, citing ‘potential conflict’ NBC News (November 9, 2023). The article includes a link to the message from the FBI Director: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/24149724/message-from-the-director-to-all-fbi-employees-on-gsa-site-selection-announcement71.pdf>