



# **COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GENERAL ON INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY**

**STATEMENT  
OF  
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**BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE**

**“OVERSIGHT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GENERAL ON INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY”**

**JULY 23, 2024**

Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and Members of the Subcommittee:  
Thank you for inviting me to testify today about the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). As you know, I am the Inspector General (IG) at the Department of the Interior and also serve as the Chairperson of CIGIE.

The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, established a unique relationship between IGs and Congress, requiring IGs to report both to the head of their respective agencies and to Congress. As a community, we take this obligation seriously. Chairman Comer said it perfectly when he wrote in a June 2023 letter that IGs report “the results of their audits, investigations and evaluations to Congress, providing critical information beneficial to our oversight.” To-date, in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, IGs and senior IG employees have testified over 50 times before House and Senate Committees. We appreciate the Subcommittee’s continued interest in and support for our fair, objective, and independent oversight across the Federal Government.

CIGIE has a great story to tell, as the statistics and oversight successes in my testimony today will show. I am honored to be here to share that story on behalf of the over 14,000 hard-working employees at the 73 Federal Offices of Inspector General (OIGs) who conduct critical oversight to combat fraud, waste, and abuse. This work includes performing thousands of audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations each year to serve the American public and protect taxpayer dollars.

## **Impact of the IG Community’s Work**

Federal OIGs promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in Government operations and help detect and deter fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. The work performed by the IG community touches every aspect of American society:

- We promote trust in our Government leaders by holding them accountable.

- We protect taxpayer dollars by making sure they are given to the intended recipients and used for the intended purposes.
- We protect the health and welfare of Americans in so many ways—we help ensure that:
  - public transportation and infrastructure are safe,
  - veterans and the elderly have the medical care they need and deserve, and
  - even astronauts in outer space are protected from orbital debris.
  - And, when we see problems, we identify them so that the agencies we oversee can take corrective action.
- We help protect whistleblowers who are just trying to do the right thing.
- We help protect against threats to the Government—from hackers to terrorists—by identifying weaknesses and vulnerabilities and offering solutions.

The IG community’s effectiveness is reflected in its results. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, OIGs’ work resulted in potential savings totaling approximately \$93.1 billion:

- \$82.2 billion from audit recommendations, and
- \$10.9 billion from investigative receivables and recoveries.

With the OIG community’s aggregate FY 2023 budget of approximately \$3.5 billion,<sup>1</sup> these potential savings represent an approximate return of \$26 for every dollar invested in OIGs through their appropriations.

In FY 2023, OIGs also helped to strengthen programs across the Federal Government through:

- 2,217 audit, inspection, and evaluation reports issued;
- 19,755 investigations closed;
- 4,691 indictments and criminal informations;
- 4,318 successful prosecutions;
- 1,106 successful civil actions;
- 2,907 suspensions or debarments; and
- 3,187 personnel actions in response to OIG findings.

In this year’s Annual Report to the President and Congress, CIGIE presented a decade’s worth of data, which provides a snapshot of just how significant an impact the OIG community’s work has had over the last 10 years:

- OIG audits and inspections have recommended \$381 billion that could be put to better use.
- Those reports also identified \$169 billion in questioned costs.
- Over the past 10 years, OIG investigators have recovered \$143 billion.
- OIG investigations have led to more than 53,000 OIG successful criminal prosecutions.
- OIG investigators also supported over 15,000 successful civil actions.
- As a result of OIG oversight, agencies have suspended and debarred just shy of 50,000 parties from doing business with the Government.

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<sup>1</sup> This total does not include amounts associated with Intelligence Community OIGs due to the classified nature of their budgets.

- Agencies also used OIG reports of investigation to take over 43,000 personnel actions against employees.

Over the course of the last decade, the OIG community has had a cumulative impact on the U.S. Government of identifying \$693 billion in potential savings. I think Congress should be proud that its investment in Inspectors General has indeed paid off.

While these impressive numbers describe the extensive impact of OIGs, they do not tell the entire story. CIGIE members' collective work results in more than just dollar figures or numbers on a page. Underpinning these statistics are real stories, real lives, and real improvements in Federal programs. Let me give you just a few examples:

- In 2019, on average, approximately 17 veterans died by suicide daily, and 7 in 10 of those were from firearm injuries. Increasing the time and distance between a veteran in crisis and their access to firearms can save lives. In FY 2021, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) OIG reviewed VA's lethal means safety training, firearms access assessment, and safety planning compliance. The VA OIG team reviewed the medical records of 480 patients with suicidal behavior events, VA policy, staff training, and survey results of over 3,000 clinicians to identify actions needed to prevent veterans' deaths by suicide. The team made seven recommendations to facilitate veteran suicide prevention and, as a result of their work, the VA is taking important steps to improve suicide prevention.
- Improving nursing homes remains one of the most complex and intransigent challenges facing the American health care system, despite universal recognition that nursing home residents deserve safe, high-quality care. Addressing challenges in the nursing home system that serves approximately 1.2 million people across more than 15,000 certified locations across the country is a top priority for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) OIG. For example, thanks to HHS OIG's investigative work, five individuals and their companies were held accountable for causing false claims to be filed for deficient care to nursing home residents in a facility in upstate New York. HHS OIG's investigation involved allegations that certain operations at the facility were entrusted to unlicensed individuals, inadequate staffing at the facility, and that its residents suffered excessive medication errors, unnecessary falls, and the development of pressure ulcers. HHS OIG excluded four individuals and four entities from participating in Federal health care programs to prevent the defendants from providing services to people who are served by these programs. As a result of this investigation, the defendants agreed to pay \$7.8 million to help reimburse Medicaid for the worthless care provided by the facility.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) OIG recently uncovered and put a stop to a complex fraud scheme that defrauded \$11.5 million from the USDA's Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation Program and the Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Program. The sprawling fraud scheme involved defendants who solicited people to file false claims, asserting they were discriminated against when they tried to get assistance from USDA for their farming operations. All seven defendants pleaded guilty to charges of mail fraud and conspiring to defraud the Internal Revenue Service.

- The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) manages a system of 183 elementary and secondary schools, that provide educational services to one of the most vulnerable populations in the United States—approximately 45,000 Native American students in 23 States. The poor condition of Indian school facilities has been reported for nearly 100 years, which the Department of the Interior (DOI) OIG has been addressing in a series of reviews. For example, its March 2024 review found systemic weaknesses in facilities management, which has caused risks to the health and safety of staff and students. The team made nine recommendations that will help BIE improve the management of deferred maintenance at school facilities. DOI OIG is also conducting a series of inspections to determine the extent to which health and safety issues exist at specific Indian schools, and whether there are adequate security and emergency management plans.
- U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID) OIG investigators and attorneys engaged with interagency counterparts to respond to allegations of widespread sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel affiliated with the United Nations (UN) World Health Organization (WHO) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The USAID OIG investigation substantiated widespread allegations of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, rape, and harassment by WHO staff and affiliates working on the USAID-funded Ebola response. The team also confirmed that senior level WHO staff in Geneva were aware of the allegations but failed to take appropriate action. Relying upon fact-based referrals by USAID OIG, USAID executed Government-wide debarments of numerous individuals responsible for the horrific assaults in the DRC. These are the first known U.S. Government debarments of individuals determined to have engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse while working for the UN. These enforcement actions help protect U.S. humanitarian assistance programming by precluding abusive personnel from working on U.S. Government funded projects in the future.
- From 2018 to 2020, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) OIG evaluated health and safety hazards at military family housing at eight installations located across the world. During the evaluation, DOD OIG found systemic deficiencies in the management of lead-based paint, asbestos-containing material, and radon. DOD OIG also found instances in which officials failed to manage fire safety and did not test for all drinking water quality hazards. DOD OIG made 10 recommendations targeting the improvement of DOD’s policies and procedures to reduce the risk of health and safety hazards of Service members and their families.
- Recently, based on the investigative work of the United States Postal Service OIG, a woman pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute fentanyl and methamphetamine, as well as conspiring to commit money laundering. The woman and a coconspirator operated vendor accounts on dark web marketplaces, and generated hundreds of thousands of dollars selling counterfeit oxycodone pills pressed with fentanyl, after which they laundered the proceeds using cryptocurrency online tools. Her sentencing is scheduled for September 2024, and she faces a mandatory statutory penalty of 10 years in prison, with a maximum statutory penalty of life in prison, as well as a fine of up to \$1 million.

Indeed, from cyber-fraud to cyberstalking, from depleted uranium to disaster preparedness, from violent gangs to veteran suicides—to name just a few—IG oversight has made an important difference on behalf of the American public.

## **CIGIE’s Support for OIGs**

CIGIE provides crucial assistance to Federal IGs as they pursue their missions of identifying and preventing fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. Specifically, CIGIE’s statutory mandate is to address cross-cutting Government oversight issues, and to support a well-trained and highly skilled workforce in Federal OIGs. In FY 2023, CIGIE achieved significant results in both areas through its standing committees, including the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC); its working groups; and its Training Institute.

Some of CIGIE’s recent accomplishments include:

- In FY 2023, the Investigations Committee provided important guidance to CIGIE’s members on the implementation of two executive orders that addressed several issues affecting the law enforcement community, including supporting the mental health of law enforcement officers, improving recruitment, use of body-worn cameras, and standards for use of force.
- In the fall, CIGIE issued its third report summarizing the most common management challenges that OIGs identified across the Government.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the report highlighted the following management challenges: information technology security, human capital, performance and accountability, financial, procurement, and grants, as well as homeland security, pandemic recovery, disaster preparedness, and climate change.
- This spring, we issued CIGIE’s first-ever report highlighting trends in Federal agencies’ cybersecurity performance under the *Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014* (FISMA) for fiscal years 2020 to 2023.<sup>3</sup>
- The PRAC’s Pandemic Analytics Center of Excellence (PACE) continues to deliver benefits to the Federal oversight community by supporting investigations involving \$2.1 billion, including those pursued by the Department of Justice COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force. The PACE demonstrates the value of expanding data-sharing opportunities across Federal agencies to better prevent and detect fraud in benefits programs before funds are disbursed.
- CIGIE’s IG Candidate Recommendation Panel has assisted numerous Designated Federal Entity (DFE) agencies across the Government to fill their IG vacancies promptly and with high-quality candidates.

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<sup>2</sup> This report is available on CIGIE’s website, at: <https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/993-087CIGIE-TMPCReport9-12.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> This report is available on CIGIE’s website, at: <https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/FISMA%20Capstone%20Report%20May%202024.pdf>

With regard to training and developing the OIG workforce, CIGIE's Training Institute enrolled nearly 12,000 students in FY 2023 across its three academies that focus on criminal investigations; audits, inspections, and evaluations; and leadership competencies. We increased our offerings to 133 learning events, which is an increase of 17 percent from the prior year. As in past years, the Training Institute continues to support capabilities that afford the entire OIG workforce access to a broad spectrum of learning opportunities. That has included an expanded coaching program; rotational experiences combining learning, apprenticeships, job-shadowing, and stretch assignments; and traditional, formal learning.

CIGIE also administers Oversight.gov, an online platform established by Congress in 2017 that serves as a one-stop shop for OIG oversight reports. There are currently over 30,000 total reports posted to the site, including audit, inspection, and evaluation reports; OIG semiannual reports; OIG peer reviews; and other OIG publications. Oversight.gov also promotes IG independence by hosting websites for OIGs. CIGIE currently hosts 24 individual OIG websites on the platform, providing OIGs with greater ability to distribute information about their offices and oversight work. The site also tracks IG vacancies, for transparency and accountability purposes.

Oversight.gov was funded by Congress with the express purpose of increasing transparency into the oversight community. It represents a productive partnership between Congress and CIGIE to effectuate that vision. Not only does Oversight.gov aid Congress in its oversight of the IG community, but it also significantly increased the public's access to OIG reports.

CIGIE remains committed to working across the OIG community and with our key stakeholders. Doing so will help us meet our shared goals of addressing integrity, economy, and effectiveness issues across Government agencies and increasing Federal OIG professionalism and effectiveness. This, in turn, ultimately benefits the American public by promoting responsive, accountable, and transparent Government programs and operations.

### **CIGIE's Legislative Priorities**

This Committee has time and again reaffirmed the importance of IG oversight through passage of and amendments to the Inspector General Act. Most recently, the Committee led efforts to enact many of CIGIE's longstanding legislative priorities, including amending the Federal Vacancies Reform Act to enhance IG protections, requiring notification to Congress when an IG is placed on non-duty status, and instituting reforms to OIG semiannual reports to Congress.

At the beginning of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, CIGIE provided this Committee with a letter that outlined the legislative priorities for the IG community.<sup>4</sup> The three CIGIE legislative priorities I will focus on today include: (1) creating a permanent data and analytics capability for the IG community; (2) establishing a Government-wide prohibition on the use of appropriated funds to deny IGs full and prompt access; and (3) enhancing independence and efficiency by providing separate and flexible OIG funding. I also want to discuss a proposal that would make a significant, lasting impact by allowing unobligated balances of expired discretionary funds appropriated to the OIGs for salaries and operating expenses to be transferred to CIGIE.

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<sup>4</sup> This letter is available on CIGIE's website, at: <https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIELegislativePriorities118thCongress.pdf>

### *Creating a Permanent Data and Analytics Capability for the IG Community*

One of CIGIE's top priorities is to preserve the data analytics capabilities of the PRAC's PACE to enable the IG community to conduct more efficient and effective oversight of all Federal spending. In 2021, under the leadership of this Committee, Congress appropriated \$40 million to create the PACE.

Less than four years later, the PACE has proven its value. It is a critical asset used by law enforcement organizations across the Government to root out issues like identity theft, multi-dipping,<sup>5</sup> and fraud. As of June 2023, the PACE has provided investigative support to over 40 federal law enforcement and OIG partners on over 875 pandemic-related investigations for more than 19,000 subjects and an estimated fraud loss of \$2.1 billion.

As the PACE has demonstrated, data analytics capabilities are powerful tools for OIGs to detect and prevent fraud. Many smaller OIGs do not have the resources necessary for antifraud analytics. CIGIE's proposal, which refers to this platform as the Central Analytics and Support Hub (Hub), would make data analytics services available to the entire IG community. The Hub would support OIGs in the oversight of covered funds primarily through data analytics and the sharing of data to identify major risks that cut across program and agency boundaries.

PRAC Chairperson Michael Horowitz has previously testified about the need to transition the PACE to CIGIE, as has the Comptroller General. I join them in emphasizing the timely need for bipartisan action to enact this proposal. It is essential that Congress' investment in the PACE is not lost when the PRAC sunsets in September 2025.

### *Establishing a Government-wide Prohibition on the Use of Appropriated Funds to Deny IGs Full and Prompt Access*

When Congress unanimously passed the Inspector General Empowerment Act of 2016, it reaffirmed that Federal IGs are entitled to full and prompt access to agency records. Despite Congress' efforts, agencies still occasionally fail to provide IGs with full and prompt access to agency records and information. In addition to existing mechanisms for reporting access issues to Congress, IGs have found that the most effective congressional action is to include a provision in an agency's appropriation prohibiting the agency from using those funds to deny an IG full and prompt access. Currently, only a limited number of agency appropriations include such a prohibition. CIGIE recommends a Government-wide prohibition to ensure full and prompt access for IGs across the Federal Government.

### *Enhancing Independence and Efficiency by Providing Separate and Flexible OIG Funding*

Through the bipartisan enactment of the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008, Congress recognized the importance of budgetary independence for OIGs and stated that each OIG's budget should be reported to the President and Congress separately from its agency's. Despite this, most Designated Federal Entity (DFE) OIGs continue to have their budgets subsumed

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<sup>5</sup> "Multi-dipping" occurs when a recipient uses funds from multiple Federal programs for the same expenses and then uses the excess funds for another purpose, which is not allowable.

within their respective agency's budget in both the President's Budget and the annual congressional appropriation, and their budgets are therefore controlled by their parent agency.<sup>6</sup>

This presents a significant risk to an OIG's independence. For example, in a situation where an agency receives a smaller appropriation than was requested in the President's Budget, an agency head may then be in the position to decrease the OIG's budget, thereby decreasing oversight of the agency, perhaps contrary to Congress' intent. When Congress is silent on this issue, it undermines the core statutory principles of OIG independence and transparency. Establishing defined budget figures for OIGs would strengthen the transparency of the overall budget process by ensuring there is no appearance that an agency has undue influence on an OIG's budget, thus reinforcing the independence and legitimacy of an OIG's findings.

Therefore, CIGIE supports specific revisions to OIG funding that would safeguard the independence of OIGs, ensure continuity of operations, and protect against OIG budget cuts by agencies. This could be accomplished by providing each OIG: (1) a funding level for OIG operations that is not subject to reduction by the parent agency; and (2) flexible availability of funding to ensure continuous oversight of the agency and the funding the OIG oversees. This would ensure effective management of OIG resources and the continuity necessary for effective and efficient oversight.

#### *CIGIE Funding Through Member OIG Expired Funds*

Pursuant to the Inspector General Act, CIGIE is primarily funded through an inefficient and complicated process of interagency collections individually deposited into a revolving fund. After developing its budgetary requirements, CIGIE informs its membership, and each member OIG includes a proportionate amount in its Congressional Budget Justification. This amount is a flat percentage across all OIGs. Once Congress appropriates funds for the relevant fiscal year, each OIG transfers the designated amount to CIGIE's revolving fund.

One proposal that would make a positive and lasting impact is to allow unobligated balances of expired discretionary funds appropriated to the OIGs for salaries and operating expenses to be transferred to CIGIE. The authority to transfer expired funds to CIGIE would provide an additional funding source that could offset future increased operating expenses and one-time costs without adversely impacting member OIGs' available annual operating budgets.

#### **Conclusion**

On behalf of the dedicated and hard-working employees of the IG community, I would like to thank the Committee for the longstanding, bipartisan support of IGs and the oversight work that we do.

All 14,000 of us in the IG community have chosen careers in the continuous improvement business—that is, we have all chosen to serve the public and make our Government better for the American people. Day after day, we make recommendations to our parent agencies and

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<sup>6</sup> There has been some progress in this regard, with 6 DFE OIGs, as well as the U.S. Government Accountability Office OIG, receiving separate appropriations in the President's Budget Request for FY 2025.



departments about how they can do things better. We are also introspective in this regard, looking for ways to continuously improve our own organizations and CIGIE at large. We welcome today's conversation with this Committee as part of our efforts.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering any questions that the Subcommittee Members may have.