

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 23, 2010

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Kathleen Tighe
Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Inspector General Tighe:

According to recent press reports, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under Secretary Janet Napolitano has impeded Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests by creating a new layer of political review. Specifically, the *Associated Press* reported that DHS political appointees required requests from “lawmakers, journalists, activist groups or watchdog organizations... to go to the political appointees” for review, and they routinely probed “for information about the requesters and delay[ed] disclosures deemed too politically sensitive.”¹ In the case of requests from Congress, DHS employees were told to specify the party affiliation of the requester.

This new layer of political review is not only alarming, but a betrayal of President Obama’s pledge to increase transparency in government. The President campaigned for office on a promise to “return government to the people by bringing government to the people,” and make government “open and transparent so that anyone can see that our business is the people’s business.”² It appears that not everyone in the Administration has taken this pledge to heart. We write to you today to inquire about the full breadth of this practice, and whether the Department of Education is also engaged in the political filtering of information requests.

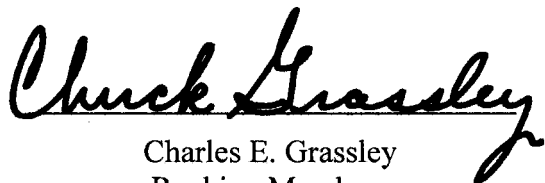
As the Inspector General of the Department of Education, we request that you conduct an inquiry into the agency’s FOIA office to determine whether, and if so, the extent to which political appointees are made aware of information requests and have a role in request reviews or decision-making. We also request that you provide us an account of your findings by no later than September 17, 2010.

¹ Ted Bridis, *AP IMPACT: A Political Filter for Info Requests*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Jul. 21, 2010, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/07/21/AR2010072103534.html>.


² Senator Barack Obama, Remarks at Manchester, New Hampshire (June 22, 2007).

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Christopher Armstrong for the Committee on Finance at (202) 224-4515 or Jonathan Skladany for the Committee on Oversight and Government at (202) 225-5074. All formal correspondence should be sent electronically in PDF format to Brian_Downey@finance-rep.senate.gov or via facsimile to (202) 228-2131.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "C" and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Issa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "D" and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

Darrell Issa
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives