

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to swiftly nominate qualified individuals to fill critical Inspector General (IG) vacancies. Inspectors General provide a vital service to the American taxpayer by rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse of federal funds and providing agencies with recommendations on how to be better stewards of public funds. In the absence of permanent leadership, IG offices are less able to fulfill their statutory mandate to promote economical, efficient, and effective administration and operation of the government.¹

In a recent Wall Street Journal opinion piece, a former chief investigative counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee wrote, “Those in government who can stand above the fray and instill public confidence, as inspectors general often do, are more vital than ever. Yet too many federal agencies have no watchdog on duty.” Currently, eight agencies await a presidentially-nominated, Senate-confirmed watchdog: the Export-Import Bank, Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Personnel Management, Tennessee Valley Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Education, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Department of Defense. The absence of an IG at the Defense Department is of particular concern due to the large budgets, personnel, contracts, and equipment it commands. As of the date of this writing, the Defense IG position has been vacant for 1,255 days, but there has yet to be a candidate nominated for Senate consideration.

Filling IG vacancies is an important step toward ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. “IG offices are most effective when led by a permanent IG, rather than an acting official,” according to the Project On Government Oversight.² “The vetting process helps instill confidence among Congress, agency officials, whistleblowers, and the public that the office of the IG is truly independent.”³ The Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency estimated in fiscal year 2016 that the government could potentially save \$45.1 billion if agencies implemented the roughly 10,000 recommendations made by IGs.⁴ In 2013, the House Oversight

¹ 5 U.S.C. app § 2 (1978).

² Project On Government Oversight, *The Watchdogs After Forty Years: Recommendations for Our Nation’s Inspectors General* at 13 (July 9, 2018).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Testimony of Michael Horowitz, Department of Justice Inspector General, and Allison Lerner, National Science Foundation Inspector General, before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform at 2 (Apr. 18, 2018).

and Government Reform Committee found “agencies without permanent IGs have a disproportionately high number of open and unimplemented recommendations.”⁵ The Department of Defense alone accounts for nearly 15 percent of open recommendations, which if implemented, could save the Department \$2.3 billion.⁶ Thus, a permanent IG is essential to maintain the global strength of the United States Armed Forces by encouraging the responsible use and oversight of our financial resources allocated to the Department of Defense.

Ultimately, instituting permanent leadership in IG offices is paramount to making any potential cost savings and oversight efforts a reality. Toward that end, we respectfully request that you move expeditiously to nominate permanent IGs, and we stand ready to encourage our respective leadership to make IG confirmations a priority and will oppose efforts to needlessly delay the confirmation of qualified candidates.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Spending
Oversight and Emergency Management
Senate Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

⁵ U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Open and Unimplemented IG Recommendations Could Save Taxpayers \$67 Billion* at 7-9 (Mar. 5, 2013).

⁶ Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General, *Compendium of Open OIG Recommendations to DoD* (Mar. 31, 2018).