

S. 579/H.R. 6450, Inspector General Empowerment Act of 2016

Senator Chuck Grassley as amended by Senator Ron Johnson

The Inspector General Empowerment Act, authored by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), strengthens office of inspector general (OIG) and inspector general (IG) independence and provides tools that OIGs need to effectively and efficiently perform their mission to root out waste, fraud and abuse within the federal government. Specifically, the bill amends the Inspector General Act of 1978 by:

1. Strengthening IG independence:
 - a. Requires GAO to conduct a one-time study on prolonged IG vacancies that would include evaluating the risks to the office of having an acting IG (particularly one vying for the permanent job) and providing recommendations for reducing these vacancies.
2. Giving IGs tools they need for effective investigations:
 - a. Exempts IGs from getting computer matching agreements or complying with the Paperwork Reduction Act, allowing them to perform investigations without first getting agency approval.
3. Improving the process by which the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency investigates IG misconduct:
 - a. Changes the membership of the Integrity Committee to ensure fair and transparent investigations;
 - b. Provides markers for when the Integrity Committee should complete investigations to promote more timely and efficient investigations.
4. Promoting greater transparency:
 - a. Requires IGs to report to Congress semiannually on various impediments to their work, such as agency interference, reports not made available to the public, and whistleblower retaliation;
 - b. Requires all IG recommendations to be sent to the head of the agency, as well as appropriate committees of Congress, unless otherwise prohibited by law;
 - c. Requires public posting of all IG reports and recommendations within three days of their final transmission to the agency, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
5. Ensuring IGs have full and prompt access to all documents:
 - a. Includes language to ensure that IGs have full and prompt access to all documents unless a statute expressly restricts access to information and expressly applies to Inspectors General.

History:

The Inspector General Empowerment Act was introduced on February 26, 2015, and passed by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee with amendments by a voice vote on March 4, 2015. The House of Representatives passed a companion bill by a voice vote on June 21, 2016, and again on December 8, 2016.

Original Senate Cosponsors:

Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) and Ron Johnson (R-Wis.)

Other Senate Cosponsors:

Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.); Joni Ernst (R-Iowa); John Cornyn (R-Texas); Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.); Susan Collins (R-Maine); Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.); Tom Carper (D-Del.); James Lankford (R-Okla.); Mark Kirk (R-Ill.); Deb Fischer (R-Neb.); Ron Wyden (D-Ore.); Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.); Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.); Gary Peters (D-Mich.); Rob Portman (R-Ohio); Jonny Isakson (R-Ga.); Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.)