

# Undoing Accountability:

An Update on Trump's Attacks Against  
Inspectors General

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# Introduction

Inspectors General were created to be independent nonpartisan watchdogs of federal agencies, programs, and personnel. Their independence, integrity, and nonpartisanship have been fundamental to their mission. However, the state of the IG community has suffered tremendously as a result of Donald Trump's attacks on Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs) over the past year, which began during his first term in office.

Just last week, the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Inspector General \(IG\)](#) wrote to congressional oversight committees warning them that “over the last several months the Department of Homeland Security (DHS or Department) has systematically obstructed the work of the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG).”<sup>1</sup> DHS has revoked or denied OIG access to at least eight databases, according to the DHS OIG, either hindering or halting their ability to conduct investigations and routine audits.<sup>2</sup> In one case, the DHS IG wrote that the agency's “intransigence is impeding a criminal investigation with national security implications.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, none of this should come as a surprise.

President Trump is engaged in a strategy of disrupting, dismantling, and diminishing the effectiveness and efficiency of federal Offices of Inspectors General, whose sole mission is to root out waste, fraud, and mismanagement in the federal government and hold corrupt, abusive, and unethical officials accountable to the public.

Specifically, these are the report's key findings:

- President Trump has removed more IGs than all other presidents combined.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See letter from Department of Homeland Security Inspector General Joseph Cuffari to relevant congressional oversight committees (March 2, 2026), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/DHS-GC-Percival-Letter.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The databases where DHS OIG's access has been revoked or denied, include: Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE's) Enforcement Integrated Database (EID); ICE's Integrated Decision Support system; Customs and Border Protection's (CBP's) BorderStat database on border crossings, inspections and related activities; CBP's Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS) relational database regarding border screening and immigration enforcement; CBP's Unified Immigration Portal; DHS's Office of Intelligence & Analysis (I&A) Counterintelligence Information Management System (CI2MS) database; Transportation Security Administration's (TSA's) Secure Flight System database; and DHS Integrated Security Management System (ISMS), regarding information on DHS employees and contractors. See letter from Department of Homeland Security Inspector General Joseph Cuffari to relevant congressional oversight committees (March 2, 2026), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/DHS-GC-Percival-Letter.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See: Cristin Dorgelo, Kathleen Romig, Nia Law, and Devin O'Connor, “Trump Administration's Undercutting of Oversight Hurts Taxpayers and Beneficiaries,” CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (November 6, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administrations-undercutting-of-oversight-hurts-taxpayers-and> and Ben Wilhelm, “Removal of Inspectors General: Rules, Practice, and Considerations for Congress,” CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (January 27, 2025), [https://www.congress.gov/crs\\_external\\_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf)

- In several cases, Trump’s removal of IGs has been closely tied to the issuance of [OIG reports](#) that have been critical of specific actions by the Trump administration or have come as a result of an IG fulfilling their duty to relay certain [whistleblower disclosures](#) to Congress.<sup>5</sup>
- In most cases, Trump has [replaced IGs](#) he has fired with those whose independence is questionable, have had close ties to his administration, or have a history of unethical or potentially illegal conduct.<sup>6</sup>
- In September 2025, the Trump administration also attempted to completely [shut-down the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency \(CIGIE\)](#), the nation’s federal IG coordinating council.<sup>7</sup>
- Trump’s actions have reduced the [number of OIG staff](#) overall by about 12% and by as much as 30% in at least one case.<sup>8</sup>

### FIRING THE INSPECTORS GENERAL

Donald Trump’s attacks on Inspectors General began within days of his taking office last year. On January 24, 2025, [Trump fired 17 Inspectors General \(IGs\)](#).<sup>9</sup> He has fired at least four other IGs since then. None of these IGs were alleged to have been ineffective or to have engaged in illegal or unethical behavior. By way of comparison, [Presidents Barack Obama](#) and [Joe Biden](#) each removed a single IG from office, in each case for an alleged cause.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See: Nahal Toosi, “Trump fires USAID’s inspector general after report critical of funding freeze,” POLITICO (February 11, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/11/trump-fires-usaid-inspector-general-00203717> and Kyle Cheney, “Atkinson: Trump fired me because I handled whistleblower complaint properly,” POLITICO (April 5, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/05/atkinson-trump-fired-whistleblower-complaint-167371>

<sup>6</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, “Most newly confirmed Trump inspectors general previously worked in his administration, raising fears about independent agency oversight,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (January 13, 2026), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2026/01/most-newly-confirmed-trump-inspectors-general-have-previously-worked-his-administration-raising-fears-about-independent-agency-oversight/410657>

<sup>7</sup> “White House Moves to Defund Key Oversight Office; Websites Go Dark,” FEDMANAGER (October 7, 2025), <https://www.fedmanager.com/news/white-house-moves-to-defund-key-oversight-office-websites-go-dark>

<sup>8</sup> “Workforce Size & Composition,” Federal Workforce Data, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM), <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>

<sup>9</sup> Chris Graham, “Friday Night Massacre: Trump fires 17 IGs, to keep the nerds from nosing around his grift,” AUGUSTA FREE PRESS (January 25, 2025), <https://augustafreepress.com/news/friday-night-massacre-trump-fires-17-inspectors-general-to-keep-the-nerds-from-nosing-around-his-grift/>

<sup>10</sup> See: Carrie Dann, “Ousted IG cited for behavior, absences from Washington,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (June 17, 2009), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2009/06/ousted-ig-cited-for-behavior-absences-from-washington/29382/> and Alex Gangitano, “Biden fires longtime railroad official after probe into toxic work environment,” THE HILL (March 29, 2024), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4563662-biden-fires-railroad-official-probe-toxic-work-environment/>

Trump administration officials tacitly acknowledged the lack of rationale for its removal of IGs in the two-sentence [termination emails](#) sent to the first group of fired IGs last January. The emails, which were all identical, and sent late Friday, January 24, 2025, in what some termed a “Friday Night Massacre,” said simply:

On behalf of President Donald J. Trump, I am writing to inform you that due to **changing priorities** your position as Inspector General of the United States Department of [.....] is terminated, effective immediately.

Thank you for your service.<sup>11</sup>

*[Emphasis added.]*

The emails were signed by Sergio Gor, Director of Presidential Personnel at The White House, with the subject line “White House Notification.” [Trump said](#) that these firings were “a very common thing to do” and were “standard.”<sup>12</sup> None of that is accurate, as elaborated below regarding his [justification](#) for his mass firings of IGs in January 2025, he said: “I don’t know them,” and “They’re not my people.”<sup>13</sup> Of course, the whole idea of IGs is that they should be independent and “not [the president’s] people.”

“None of us were fired for doing anything wrong,” says one of those fired IGs. “As IGs we are independent and should not promote the priorities of any Administration. You can’t do independent oversight if you are pushing the Administration’s priorities. If you do that you are in the wrong job,” says the former IG.

Trump has subsequently fired at least four more IGs, for a total of 21 fired IGs, since last year. He also [removed five IGs in 2020](#), during his first term.<sup>14</sup> In several cases Trump’s removal of IGs has been in direct response to their exercising their independence and highlighting administration wrongdoing.

On February 10, 2025, a little over two weeks after Trump fired 17 IGs for no apparent cause, the Inspector General of the U.S. Agency for International Development issued a

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<sup>11</sup> Robert P. Storch, et. al., vs. Pete Hegseth, et. al., Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, Civil Case No. 1:25-cv-415, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (February 12, 2025), <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/eight-inspectors-general-sue-trump-firings.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Lucia I Suarez Sang, Scott MacFarlane, and Nancy Cordes, “Trump fires multiple federal inspectors general in overnight purge,” CBS NEWS (January 27, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-federal-inspectors-general-fired/>

<sup>13</sup> Shane Galvin, “Trump reportedly defends late-night purge of executive agency inspectors general: ‘They’re not my people,’” NEW YORK POST (January 26, 2025), <https://nypost.com/2025/01/26/us-news/trump-defends-late-night-purge-of-executive-agency-inspectors-general/>

<sup>14</sup> Melissa Quinn, “The internal watchdogs Trump has fired or replaced,” CBS NEWS (May 19, 2020) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-inspectors-general-internal-watchdogs-fired-list/>

short, five-page, [public advisory notice](#) titled: “Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance.”<sup>15</sup> The report focused on identifying risks and challenges to the distribution of “\$8.2 billion in obligated but undisbursed humanitarian assistance funds...” and the impact on distributing this aid given the fact the Trump administration had furloughed or placed on administrative leave more than 90% of USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) staff.<sup>16</sup>

“The pause in funding and reductions in staff ... has undermined two key oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability over humanitarian assistance funding: partner vetting and third-party monitoring,” the advisory notice warned.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, the Trump administration’s stated [rationale](#) for dismantling USAID was because of alleged inadequate monitoring of USAID funds.<sup>18</sup>

One day later, [Trump fired Paul Martin, the USAID Inspector General](#).<sup>19</sup>

A similar retaliatory firing occurred at the Department of Education. René Rocque became the Acting IG at the Department of Education in January 2025, after Trump fired her boss, the [Department of Education IG Sandra Bruce](#).<sup>20</sup> On May 23, 2025, Rocque sent a [letter to the relevant committees](#) in the House of Representatives informing them that the Department of Education was failing to cooperate with her office’s investigation regarding

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<sup>15</sup> “Advisory Notice: Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance,” OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (February 10, 2025), <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Hansler, “USAID IG fired day after report critical of impacts of Trump administration’s dismantling of the agency,” CNN (February 11, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/11/politics/usaaid-inspector-general-fired-trump>

<sup>17</sup> “Advisory Notice: Oversight of USAID-Funded Humanitarian Assistance Programming Impacted by Staffing Reductions and Pause on Foreign Assistance,” OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (February 10, 2025), <https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/USAID%20OIG%20-%20Oversight%20of%20USAID-Funded%20Humanitarian%20Assistance%20Programming%20021025.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Fatma Tanis, “Clawing back foreign aid is tied to ‘fraud, waste and abuse.’ What’s the evidence?” OREGON PUBLIC BROADCASTING (OPB) (July 16, 2025), <https://www.opb.org/article/2025/07/16/rescission-of-foreign-aid-linked-to-fraud-waste-and-abuse-is-there-proof/>

<sup>19</sup> Ellen Knickmeyer, “White House fires USAID inspector general after warning about funding oversight, officials say,” ASSOCIATED PRESS (February 11, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/usaaid-american-companies-layoffs-lawsuit-8c116d877c179169fbce2d3348fcd997>

<sup>20</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, “2 independent watchdogs quietly replaced by Trump,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (July 29, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/07/two-independent-watchdogs-quietly-replaced-trump/407073/>

the impact of significant workforce changes on the agency’s programs and operations.<sup>21</sup> Rocque wrote: “[O]ver the last 6 weeks the OIG has experienced unreasonable denials and repeated delays from the Department in providing the OIG access to documents, staff, and information” which were preventing the OIG from fulfilling its “statutory mission to oversee the Department’s programs and operations under the Inspector General Act.”<sup>22</sup> The letter concluded: “The Department has not demonstrated its commitment to fully cooperate with the OIG and is interfering with the OIG’s ability to conduct an independent and timely review.”<sup>23</sup>

Less than two weeks later, on June 4, 2025, Donald [Trump removed Rocque as the Acting IG](#).<sup>24</sup>

Many or most of these firings have been determined to be [illegal](#).<sup>25</sup> The [Inspector General Act](#) does permit the President to remove an IG. However, the President must provide a 30-day notice to Congress before the IG’s removal. This clause was established as part of the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008. In addition, the Securing Inspector General Independence Act of 2022, implemented as a direct result of President Trump’s firing of several IGs during his first term in May 2020, includes a clause that the President must provide both a “substantive rationale” and case-specific reasons for the removal of any IG.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Letter from René L. Rocque, Acting Inspector General, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, Department of Education, (May 23, 2025), to Chairs and Ranking Members of Committee on Education and Workforce, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed\\_oig\\_letter\\_to\\_house\\_committees.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed\\_oig\\_letter\\_to\\_house\\_committees.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed\\_oig\\_letter\\_to\\_house\\_committees.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ed_oig_letter_to_house_committees.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, “2 independent watchdogs quietly replaced by Trump,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (July 29, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/07/two-independent-watchdogs-quietly-replaced-trump/407073/> and “Designation of Heidi Semann as Acting Inspector General of the Department of Education –Message From the President of the United States (H. DOC. NO. 119–58),” CONGRESSIONAL RECORD –HOUSE (June 5, 2025), <https://www.congress.gov/119/crec/2025/06/05/171/96/CREC-2025-06-05.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Robert P. Storch, et. al., vs. Pete Hegseth, et. al., “Memorandum Opinion,” Civil Action No. 25-cv-415 (ACR), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (September 24, 2025), <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/district-of-columbia/dcdce/1:2025cv00415/277385/54/0.pdf?ts=1758977558>, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> See: Ben Wilhelm, “Removal of Inspectors General: Rules, Practice, and Considerations for Congress,” CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (January 27, 2025), [https://www.congress.gov/crs\\_external\\_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf); “Trump and the Inspectors General: An Assessment,” PUBLIC PROCUREMENT INTERNATIONAL (Undated), <https://publicprocurementinternational.com/trump-igs-in-depth-assessment/>; and Senator Chuck Grassley, “Prepared Floor Remarks by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa On the Securing Inspector General Independence Act,” (May 19, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-on-the-securing-inspector-general-independence-act>

In a few cases Donald Trump has provided notice to Congress about his removal of specific IGs, although the [rationale has been extraordinarily weak](#).<sup>27</sup> In virtually all cases of removal he has ignored the law, and in the vast majority of these cases he has disregarded the requirements as dictated in the Inspector General Act.

[Eight of the IGs fired](#) in January 2025 sued the Trump administration over their firings, seeking reinstatement.<sup>28</sup> In September 2025, Judge Ana Reyes found that it was “obvious” that [President Trump violated the Inspector General Act](#).<sup>29</sup> When Trump fired 17 IGs on January 24, 2025, she wrote: “He did not first notify Congress and he did not provide any rationale, much less a substantive one containing detailed and case-specific reasons for the firing[s].”<sup>30</sup> Although the judge found that the eight IGs who brought the lawsuit were fired unlawfully, she refused to reinstate them, saying the IG’s had not proven that they had suffered “irreparable harm.”<sup>31</sup>

In October 2025, despite the fact that Judge Reyes had just found that the firing of the IGs in January 2025 violated the Inspector General Act, [Trump fired another IG](#), the Inspector General of the Export-Import Bank, Parisa Salehi, in a similar manner and failed to provide either proper notification to Congress or any rationale for the firing.<sup>32</sup>

## SLASHING INSPECTOR GENERAL OFFICE STAFFING

The Trump administration has also slashed the staffing at IG offices through early retirements, attrition, and in some cases firings. Overall, OIG staff is down about 12% from 2024, including 16% in the Department of Veterans Affairs OIG, more than 18% in the

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<sup>27</sup> Cristin Dorgelo, Kathleen Romig, Nia Law, and Devin O’Connor, “Trump Administration’s Undercutting of Oversight Hurts Taxpayers and Beneficiaries,” CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (November 6, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administrations-undercutting-of-oversight-hurts-taxpayers-and>

<sup>28</sup> Kyle Cheney, “Federal watchdogs fired by Trump urge court to reinstate them,” POLITICO (February 12, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/12/inspectors-general-trump-lawsuit-00203780>

<sup>29</sup> Robert P. Storch, et. al., vs. Pete Hegseth, et. al., “Memorandum Opinion,” Civil Action No. 25-cv-415 (ACR), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (September 24, 2025), <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/district-of-columbia/dcdce/1:2025cv00415/277385/54/0.pdf?ts=1758977558>, p.3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/district-of-columbia/dcdce/1:2025cv00415/277385/54/0.pdf?ts=1758977558>, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> See: Jory Heckman, “Judge finds Trump unlawfully fired agency IGs, but won’t reinstate them,” FEDERAL NEWS NETWORK (September 24, 2025), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/agency-oversight/2025/09/trump-unlawfully-fired-17-agency-igs-judge-finds-but-wont-reinstate-them/> and Mike Spector, “Judge will not reinstate US government watchdogs despite unlawful firings,” REUTERS (September 25, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/judge-will-not-reinstate-us-government-watchdogs-despite-unlawful-firings-2025-09-24/>

<sup>32</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, “Trump fires another inspector general, raising fears about oversight independence,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (October 21, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/10/trump-fires-another-inspector-general-raising-fears-about-oversight-independence/408950/>

Department of Labor OIG, and more than 30% in the Department of Treasury OIG, according to the [Office of Personnel Management](#).<sup>33</sup>

**Table 1: Staff Reductions in Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs) from 2024 to 2026<sup>34</sup>**

Agency	2024 Staff Level	2026 Staff Level	Drop in Staff from 2024 to 2026	% Drop from 2024 to 2026
Department of the Treasury OIG	224	156	-68	30.36%
Department of Labor OIG	315	258	-57	18.10%
Department of the Treasury OIG for Tax Administration	799	662	-137	17.15%
Department of Veterans Affairs OIG	1,179	990	-189	16.03%
Department of the Interior OIG	280	236	-44	15.7%
Department of Defense OIG	1,874	1,616	-258	13.8%
Department of Agriculture OIG	423	366	-57	13.48%
Department of Justice OIG	574	500	-74	12.89%
Department of Health and Human Services OIG	1,544	1,359	-185	11.98%
Department of Homeland Security OIG	795	700	-95	11.95%

Source: Public Citizen analysis of Office of Personnel and Management Data, <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>

<sup>33</sup> “Workforce Size & Composition,” Federal Workforce Data, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM), <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>

<sup>34</sup> “Workforce Size & Composition,” Federal Workforce Data, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM), <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>

Diminishing OIG staff numbers combined with mass firings of Inspectors General (IGs) will inevitably make IG offices less effective and potentially less aggressive in their mission to root out waste, fraud, and abuse.

### UNDERMINING IG AUTONOMY AND AUTHORITY

The Trump administration has sought to undermine independence and autonomy of IGs in other ways, as well. In February 2026, for example, the General Counsel at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), James Percival, wrote a letter to the DHS OIG that tacitly [threatened the independence of the DHS Office of Inspector General](#) by requesting a list of the OIG's ongoing audits and investigations, and suggesting that the DHS Secretary has the authority to shut down the OIG's investigations.<sup>35</sup>

Some agencies have also engaged in end runs around the use of the still-functioning OIG offices. William J. Pulte, Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), appears to have done Trump's bidding in opening [alleged mortgage fraud complaints](#) against at least four of Trump's perceived enemies, New York Attorney General Letitia James, Federal Reserve Board Governor Lisa Cook, Senator Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Congressman Eric Swalwell (D-CA).<sup>36</sup>

Pulte referred these matters to the U.S. Department of Justice. Typically, based on decades of precedent, and in compliance with established ethics regulations, the complaints should have first been referred to the FHFA Office of Inspector General.<sup>37</sup> That did not happen in at least some of these cases. As [Reuters](#) reported in October 2025, "The Trump [FHFA] appointee accusing the president's political foes of mortgage fraud skipped over this agency's inspector general when making criminal referrals, according to seven people familiar with the matter, bypassing rules meant to ensure that federal officials don't abuse their power for partisan purposes."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rebecca Beitsch, "DHS demanded list of ongoing investigations from its watchdog," THE HILL (February 9, 2026), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5730522-dhs-list-ongoing-investigation-inspector-general/>

<sup>36</sup> "Document shows DOJ examining the handling of mortgage fraud investigation into Sen. Schiff Politics," PBS NEWS (November 20, 2025), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/document-shows-doj-examining-the-handling-of-mortgage-fraud-investigation-into-sen-schiff>

<sup>37</sup> Marisa Taylor and Chris Prentice, "Exclusive: Trump official bypassed ethics rules in criminal referrals of Fed governor and other foes, sources say," REUTERS (October 6, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-official-bypassed-ethics-rules-criminal-referrals-fed-governor-other-foes-2025-10-06/>

<sup>38</sup> See: Marisa Taylor and Chris Prentice, "Exclusive: Trump official bypassed ethics rules in criminal referrals of Fed governor and other foes, sources say," REUTERS (October 6, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-official-bypassed-ethics-rules-criminal-referrals-fed-governor-other-foes-2025-10-06/>; Sean Michael Newhouse, "New watchdog at Education Department may have shared pro-Trump social media posts," GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (November 12, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/11/new-watchdog-education-department-may-have-shared-pro->

According to multiple media reports, the [FHFA IG, Joe Allen](#) shared information with federal prosecutors related to the mortgage fraud allegations as his office is required to do in criminal referral cases.<sup>39</sup> He was preparing to send a letter to Congress notifying them that FHFA was being uncooperative with his office when he too was [fired by President Trump](#) in early November 2025.<sup>40</sup>

### COMPROMISING INDEPENDENCE: TRUMP'S IG HIRES

President Trump has not rushed to fill the Inspector General positions that have come open due to his mass firings. As of October 2025, more than [75 percent](#) of presidentially appointed inspector general positions were vacant.<sup>41</sup>

Those he has appointed to fill inspector general positions are commonly political allies. Most have worked as political appointees inside the agencies they are charged with monitoring as IGs, a complete departure from historic practice, creating conflicts that would normally be viewed as disqualifying. [Government Executive](#) found that six of eight IGs that Trump has appointed since January 2025 had previously served in his first or second term in political or policy-related positions, calling into question their independence.<sup>42</sup> In at least three cases, the IGs previously worked for the head of the agency that they are now charged with overseeing, creating an unequivocal conflict of interest.

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[trump-social-media-posts/409474/](#); and Sarah N. Lynch, Chris Prentice and Marisa Taylor, "Exclusive: Trump ousts watchdog of US housing regulator involved in mortgage probes of his foes, sources say," REUTERS (November 4, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/watchdog-being-ousted-us-housing-regulator-involved-trump-crackdown-sources-say-2025-11-03/>

<sup>39</sup> See: Sarah N. Lynch, Chris Prentice and Marisa Taylor, "Exclusive: Trump ousts watchdog of US housing regulator involved in mortgage probes of his foes, sources say," REUTERS (November 4, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/watchdog-being-ousted-us-housing-regulator-involved-trump-crackdown-sources-say-2025-11-03/> and Sean Michael Newhouse, "Housing regulator watchdog ousted, another in Trump's ongoing replacement of acting inspectors general," GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (November 7, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/11/housing-regulator-watchdog-ousted-another-trumps-ongoing-replacement-acting-inspectors-general/409406/>

<sup>40</sup> Sarah N. Lynch, Chris Prentice and Marisa Taylor, "Exclusive: Trump ousts watchdog of US housing regulator involved in mortgage probes of his foes, sources say," REUTERS (November 4, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/watchdog-being-ousted-us-housing-regulator-involved-trump-crackdown-sources-say-2025-11-03/>

<sup>41</sup> Chris Piper, "President Trump's firing of inspectors general threatens government accountability and efficiency," PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE (October 21, 2025), <https://ourpublicservice.org/blog/president-trumps-firing-of-inspectors-general-threatens-government-accountability-and-efficiency>

<sup>42</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, "Most newly confirmed Trump inspectors general previously worked in his administration, raising fears about independent agency oversight," GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (January 13, 2026), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2026/01/most-newly-confirmed-trump-inspectors-general-have-previously-worked-his-administration-raising-fears-about-independent-agency-oversight/410657>

An IG cannot credibly work independently and without favor to uncover waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement in an agency or department run by their former boss. In the last four decades, with one exception—in [1981](#)<sup>43</sup> no person has been appointed IG with such conflicts. Yet these sorts of conflicts have been normalized under Donald Trump.

[Christopher Fox](#), the current IG for the Intelligence Community previously served as a senior advisor to the Director of National Intelligence and Acting Chief of the Office of Director of National Intelligence's (ODNI's) Information Management Office, where he managed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, classification reviews, and declassification efforts, including the production of materials to Congress.<sup>44</sup> In October 2025, he was confirmed as the IG for the Intelligence Community overseeing both the agency he previously worked for and his former boss, Tulsi Gabbard, the Director of National Intelligence.<sup>45</sup>

[Cheryl Mason](#), the Trump-appointed IG at the Department of Veterans Affairs, served as a senior advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from January to July 2025 and was appointed IG in August 2025, according to her LinkedIn profile.<sup>46</sup> She has a long career in the VA, including as Chair of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, causing clear conflicts in her role as an independent unbiased investigator.

[John Walk](#) was sworn in as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) IG on January 5, 2026. His official bio says he held previous positions at the USDA, including as senior advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture from July 2025 until January 2026. Remarkably, from 2017 until 2020, he served as associate counsel to President Trump at the White House Counsel's Office.<sup>47</sup> The conflicts for an Inspector General that is supposed to be nonpartisan and independent could not be any clearer.

"One of the calling cards of IGs is to be independent," says one former IG. "Now watchdogs are being taken off the playing field and replaced with partisan individuals tied to the administration," he says. This IG and others worry about the impact this will have on public accountability in both the short and long term.

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<sup>43</sup> "Appointment of Six Inspectors General," RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM (March 26, 1981), <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/appointment-six-inspectors-general>

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Fox, Intelligence Community Inspector General, Official Biography, OFFICE OF DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (ODNI) (Undated), <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/organizations/icig/icig-about-us/icig-leadership/icig-ig-bio>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/organizations/icig/icig-about-us/icig-leadership/icig-ig-bio>

<sup>46</sup> Cheryl Mason, LinkedIn Profile, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cheri-cheryl-mason-executiveleader/>; and Sean Michael Newhouse, "Trump watchdog nominees draw congressional scrutiny for political histories," GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (June 18, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2025/06/trump-watchdog-nominees-draw-congressional-scrutiny-political-histories/406177/>

<sup>47</sup> John Walk, Inspector General, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Official Biography, <https://usdaoig.oversight.gov/about/inspector-general-biography>

In addition, in at least two other cases the Inspectors General that were appointed by Trump have a documented history of engaging in unethical or potentially illegal conduct.

**T. (“Thomas”) March Bell** is the current IG at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).<sup>48</sup> In March 2025, when Bell’s nomination as the HHS Inspector General by Trump became clear, several members of Congress, in a [letter led by Rep. Don Beyer](#) (D-Virginia), wrote to President Trump to ensure he was aware of Bell’s sordid history. The letter said, in part:

In 1997, Bell was forced to resign from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for mishandling taxpayer funds by directing improper payments to a former colleague, who had himself resigned over attempting to orchestrate a “deceptive media campaign against a legislative committee.” At the time, the Virginia auditor of public accounts found that Bell had violated Virginia policy by approving \$8,000 in compensatory payments with no documentation, violating not only “internal procedures” but also Commonwealth-wide policies designed to protect taxpayer funds. That disregard for basic transparency and accountability requirements was part of what the Daily Press described as a DEQ leadership-wide pattern of “[thinking] the law doesn’t apply to them” — a pattern obviously at odds with the serious work of an inspector general.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> T. March Bell, Inspector General, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), official biography, [https://oig.hhs.gov/documents/root/11434/Bell\\_Bio.pdf](https://oig.hhs.gov/documents/root/11434/Bell_Bio.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> See: Letter from Rep. Don Beyer, et. al. to President Donald Trump regarding the nomination of T. March Bell as Inspector General (IG) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (March 28, 2025), [https://beyer.house.gov/uploadedfiles/virginia\\_house\\_delegation\\_letter\\_re\\_nomination\\_of\\_t.\\_march\\_bell.pdf](https://beyer.house.gov/uploadedfiles/virginia_house_delegation_letter_re_nomination_of_t._march_bell.pdf); Amanda Seitz, “Trump nominates Republican once accused of mishandling taxpayer funds as HHS watchdog,” ASSOCIATED PRESS (March 25, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/hhs-inspector-general-bell-planned-parenthood-investigations-f82e4543ee6ab3ba3b15e518bd5883cb>; Spencer Hsu, “Environmental Official Ousted from VA. Post Pay Authorization Costs Aide His Job,” THE WASHINGTON POST (June 17, 1997), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/06/18/environmental-official-ousted-from-va-post/b501f00b-3a3a-439e-8e5d-5ef70169b4f2/>; “Bell’s Departure,” DAILY PRESS (June 19, 1997; Updated August 17, 2019), <https://www.dailypress.com/1997/06/19/bells-departure/>; NBC New York Staff and Greg Cergol, “NY congressman hired his lover and fiancée’s daughter in possible ethics violation: Report,” NBC NEWS (September 24, 2024), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/anthony-desposito-nassau-county-long-island-congressman-ethics-violation/5824696/>; and Letter from Kyle Herrig, Executive Director, Congressional Integrity Project to Omar Ashmawy, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS, U.S. House of Representatives, Re: Request for Investigation of Representative Anthony D’Esposito (September 24, 2024), <https://congressionalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/DEsposito-Ethics-Complaint-9.24.24.pdf>

Bell also made it clear during his October 2025 [Senate confirmation hearing](#) that being independent and nonpartisan as an Inspector General was not his primary objective. Instead, he said he would “support the initiatives of President Trump and Secretary [of HHS] Robert F. Kennedy Jr.”<sup>50</sup>

[Anthony D’Esposito](#) is a former New York City Detective and Republican Congressman who was sworn into office on January 5, 2026, as the Department of Labor Inspector General.<sup>51</sup> D’Esposito has a troubling past, however, and has been accused of an assortment of unethical and potentially illegal behavior in both of his previous positions.<sup>52</sup> These include [four complaints](#) against D’Esposito when he was a police detective and two settled lawsuits.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, [New York Times](#) and other reporting suggest that D’Esposito may have violated congressional ethics rules when he was a Member of Congress between 2023 and 2025, by reportedly hiring his fiancée’s daughter into his office, in addition to a woman with whom he was allegedly having an affair at the time.<sup>54</sup>

D’Esposito has also recently been accused of potentially violating the Hatch Act. Democratic [Senator Blumenthal filed a complaint](#) with the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) on February 10, 2026, alleging that D’Esposito may have violated the Hatch Act because

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<sup>50</sup> Sean Michael Newhouse, “Most newly confirmed Trump inspectors general previously worked in his administration, raising fears about independent agency oversight,” GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE (January 13, 2026), <https://www.govexec.com/oversight/2026/01/most-newly-confirmed-trump-inspectors-general-have-previously-worked-his-administration-raising-fears-about-independent-agency-oversight/410657>

<sup>51</sup> Anthony D’Esposito, Inspector General, OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, Department of Labor, <https://www.oig.dol.gov/igbio.htm>

<sup>52</sup> See: “FEC Records Show Trump Nominee for DOL Inspector General Misled Congress About Campaign Contributions,” Press Release, Office of Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) (October 24, 2025), <https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/fec-records-show-trump-nominee-for-dol-inspector-general-misled-congress-about-campaign-contributions> and Senator Blumenthal Letter to Department of Labor Inspector General Anthony D’Esposito (September 24, 2025), [https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2025-10-24\\_letter\\_desposito.pdf](https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2025-10-24_letter_desposito.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> “Anthony Desposito Profile,” LEGAL AID SOCIETY, <https://www.50-a.org/officer/KOGK>; <https://www.50-a.org/officer/KOGK#lawsuits-details>

<sup>54</sup> See: Nicholas Fandos, “A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll.” THE NEW YORK TIMES (September 23, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html>; NBC New York Staff and Greg Cergol, “NY congressman hired his lover and fiancée’s daughter in possible ethics violation: Report,” NBC NEWS (September 24, 2024), <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/anthony-desposito-nassau-county-long-island-congressman-ethics-violation/5824696/>; and Letter from Kyle Herring, Executive Director, Congressional Integrity Project to Omar Ashmawy, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS, U.S. House of Representatives, Re: Request for Investigation of Representative Anthony D’Esposito (September 24, 2024), <https://congressionalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/DEsposito-Ethics-Complaint-9.24.24.pdf>; “Possible third D’Esposito-Gillen matchup looms, even as he starts new D.C. job,” NEWSDAY (December 28, 2025), <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/politics/gillen-desposito-addg3u1i>

it appears he is running for Congress in New York's Fourth Congressional District.<sup>55</sup> The [Hatch Act forbids](#) executive branch employees from running for a partisan political office.<sup>56</sup> However, D'Esposito has an active Congressional campaign website that says "Re-Elect Anthony D'Esposito" to Congress, and Senator Blumenthal wrote in his letter that D'Esposito had a "D'Esposito For New York" campaign committee that was still receiving donations late last year.<sup>57</sup>

These sorts of conflicts and questionable behaviors are not supposed to occur in the OIG community. "This entire Inspector General construct is built around being apolitical and independent and you simply can't insert politics into this oasis of nonpartisan oversight if you want fair and objective oversight," warns Mark Lee Greenblatt, the former Inspector General at the Department of Interior and a former Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), which serves as the coordinating council for federal IG offices. Greenblatt was one of the 17 IGs fired by Trump with no explanation in January 2025.

### **ATTEMPTING TO GUT THE COUNCIL OF INSPECTORS GENERAL FOR INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY (CIGIE)**

President Trump's apparent disdain for public accountability and government oversight is clear by his continuing unfounded attacks against federal Inspectors General. In September 2025, the [Trump Administration attempted to dismantle CIGIE](#) completely. Last year, the administration halted congressionally approved funding to CIGIE, and it was forced to furlough twenty-five employees and temporarily cease functioning. In a letter to congressional members at the time Tammy Hull, the acting chair of CIGIE, and the U.S. Postal Service IG, wrote:

If unfunded, Oversight.gov and twenty-eight supported  
OIG websites will be disrupted on October 1.

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<sup>55</sup> Senator Richard Blumenthal letter to Acting Special Counsel Jamieson Greer, U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL (February 10, 2026), [https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10 letter to greer desposito.pdf](https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10%20letter%20to%20greer%20desposito.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> "A Guide to the Hatch Act for Federal Employees," U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL (September 2014) <https://osc.gov/Documents/Outreach%20and%20Training/Handouts/A%20Guide%20to%20the%20Hatch%20Act%20for%20Federal%20Employees.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> See: D'Esposito for Congress, <https://despositoforcongress.com/>; Senator Richard Blumenthal letter to Acting Special Counsel Jamieson Greer, U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL (February 10, 2026), [https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10 letter to greer desposito.pdf](https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10%20letter%20to%20greer%20desposito.pdf); Senator Blumenthal letter to Anthony D'Esposito (October 24, 2025), [https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2025-10-24 letter desposito.pdf](https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2025-10-24%20letter%20desposito.pdf); Carl Campanile, "Anthony D'Esposito to take on Rep. Laura Gillen in Round 3 match, GOP sources say," NEW YORK POST (January 8, 2026), <https://nypost.com/2026/01/08/us-news/anthony-desposito-to-take-on-rep-laura-gillen-in-round-3-match-gop-sources-say/>; and Senator Richard Blumenthal letter to Acting Special Counsel Jamieson Greer, U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL (February 10, 2026), [https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10 letter to greer desposito.pdf](https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2026-02-10%20letter%20to%20greer%20desposito.pdf)

Whistleblowers will not be able to file anonymous complaints online with these OIGs. Additionally, individual efforts by each OIG to re-launch their own legally required site will be incredibly inefficient and costly to the government.<sup>58</sup>

Congressional and public pressure forced some CIGIE funds to be released, but these actions temporarily shut down the CIGIE website ([www.oversight.gov](http://www.oversight.gov)).<sup>59</sup> [Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley](#) wrote to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) about those cuts and raised his concerns about the administration's actions, which resulted in halting the total and immediate shut-down of the office, and disrupted avenues for whistleblower disclosures.<sup>60</sup>

## Whistleblowers & Inspectors General

Whistleblowers are critically important to government oversight and to the Inspector General community. Federal IG offices receive hundreds of thousands of whistleblower complaints each year. Under Trump, insider disclosures of wrongdoing have been dismissed and the whistleblowers fired or punished. That stark reality has deterred whistleblowing, making it easier for wrongdoing to persist. Political interference also appears to have hindered whistleblower disclosures to Congress.

Whistleblowers still file complaints, however, raising the question of how an IG system compromised under President Trump will manage them. Now controversy has emerged around the handling of a classified whistleblower disclosure to the Office of the Inspector General for the Intelligence Community, originally filed in May 2025.<sup>61</sup> The whistleblower's attorney, Andrew Bakaj, has alleged that Tulsi Gabbard, the Director of

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from Tammy L. Hull, Acting Chair, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, September 27, 2025, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26173184-cigie-letter-to-congress-september-27-2025/>

<sup>59</sup> Scott MacFarlane, "Trump administration to defund federal watchdog council," CBS NEWS (October 1, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-defunding-council-of-inspectors-general/>

<sup>60</sup> "Grassley, Collins Urge OMB to Release Appropriated Inspector General Funds," Majority Press Release, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, September 30, 2025, <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/rep/releases/grassley-collins-urge-omb-to-release-appropriated-inspector-general-funds>

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Christopher Fox, Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to congressional intelligence oversight committees (February 2, 2026), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26798273-ic-ig-memo/>

## Whistleblowers & Inspectors General (continued)

National Intelligence (DNI), for political reasons has maneuvered to delay the IG's informing Congress about the disclosure.<sup>62</sup> The whistleblower disclosure revolves around the interception by the National Security Agency (NSA) of a conversation between two foreign intelligence officials reportedly discussing Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.<sup>63</sup>

On February 2, 2026, Christopher Fox, the Trump-appointed IG for the Intelligence Community who previously served as a senior advisor to the DNI, sent a letter to the congressional intelligence committees outlining the issues regarding the whistleblower disclosure.<sup>64</sup> The credibility of the disclosures still appear in dispute, and IG Fox wrote that he did not believe the complaint met the "urgent concern" criteria regarding disclosure to Congress. However, he indicated that he would be providing at least some relevant documentation about the whistleblower disclosure to Congress.

Disagreements surrounding the complaint and the IG's responsibility to report information about it to Congress, have become contentious. Republican leaders are accepting of the DNI's explanations regarding the credibility of the complaint. Democratic intelligence committee leaders have denounced the seeming obstruction by the DNI in preventing the IG's office and the whistleblower attorney from reporting the disclosure to Congress by failing to provide them with needed "security guidance" for many months.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, on February 10, 2026, DNI Tulsi Gabbard's general counsel, Jack Dever, warned the whistleblower attorney, Andrew Bakaj, against sharing any top-secret information in the whistleblower complaint with Congress.<sup>66</sup> Bakaj replied, writing: "It is difficult to reach any other conclusion but that the DNI is deliberately obstructing our client's ability to directly communicate with the congressional intelligence committees and provide a briefing of the contents of their whistleblower complaint."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>62</sup> David Klepper, "Complaint accuses Gabbard of playing politics with intelligence, which spy agency rejects," ASSOCIATED PRESS (February 3, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/gabbard-complaint-warner-intelligence-classified-93ae8bc42c475affa017fcb3e2bf1270>

<sup>63</sup> Joe Sommerlad, "Whistleblower complaint against Gabbard revolves around intercepted call about Kushner," THE INDEPENDENT (Feb. 7, 2026), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/jared-kushner-tulsi-gabbard-whistleblower-complaint-b2919723.html>

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Christopher Fox, Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to congressional intelligence oversight committees (February 2, 2026), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/26798273-ic-ig-memo/>

<sup>65</sup> David Klepper, "Republicans reject complaint about Gabbard as Democrats question time it took to see it," ASSOCIATED PRESS (February 5, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/gabbard-complaint-intelligence-congress-75a213fa1d0c4c23955596870d27f623>

<sup>66</sup> Letter from ODNI General Counsel Jack Dever to Whistleblower Aid Chief Counsel Andrew Bakaj (February 2, 2026), <https://whistlebloweraid.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/ODNI-OGC-letter-to-WB-dated-Feb-2-2026.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Whistleblower Aid Chief Legal Counsel Andrew P. Bakaj and founder Mark S. Zaid to Office of the Director of National Intelligence General Counsel Jack Dever (February 11, 2026).

## INSPECTORS GENERAL BENEFIT ALL AMERICANS

All of this matters. IGs combat fraud and wrongdoing, they hold wrongdoers accountable, they protect whistleblowers, they save taxpayers billions of dollars, and they are supposed to maintain their independence from political pressure.

IGs trace back to the earliest days of the Republic. In the late 1700s, Inspectors General were used by the American military to help oversee military purchases and to evaluate the preparedness of military units. In the late 1970s, partly as a response to the Watergate scandal and the need for improved oversight of government operations, IGs were established as a federal watchdog institution at one dozen government agencies, including at the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Education, Transportation, Labor, Interior and Veterans Affairs.<sup>68</sup>

The foundational concept of the IGs is that they be independent from the executive branch. Although about half of the federal IGs are appointed by the President (the others are appointed by the head of the agency or department they monitor), their obligation is to keep Congress and the agency heads of the departments they oversee informed about “problems and deficiencies” in those agencies. They do not have a direct reporting obligation to the President of the United States. The law was constructed this way to help prevent political interference with IG independence, objectivity, and nonpartisanship.

[The Act](#) notes that the appointment of an IG must be “without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations.” In addition, it makes clear that the IG will have wide independence to prevent interference with their work. The head of the agency cannot “prevent or prohibit the Inspector General from initiating, carrying out, or completing any audit or investigation, or from issuing any subpoena during the course of any audit or investigation,” the Act says.<sup>69</sup>

Today, there are more than 70 IGs throughout the government. The IGs proliferated because of their success at rooting out waste, fraud, abuse, corruption, and mismanagement within the federal government. Over the past five decades, Inspectors General have saved U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars by helping to establish more efficient government programs, making government projects and programs more effective, and strengthening America’s safety and security through conducting audits and investigations. [Between FY2015 and FY2024](#), OIG investigations led to more than 44,000

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<https://whistlebloweraid.org/whistleblower-aid-accuses-dni-of-stonewalling-considers-lawsuit-to-enforce-whistleblowers-rights/>

<sup>68</sup> Inspector General Act of 1978, U.S. CONGRESS, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/8588/text>

<sup>69</sup> Ben Wilhelm, “Removal of Inspectors General: Rules, Practice, and Considerations for Congress,” CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (January 27, 2025), [https://www.congress.gov/crs\\_external\\_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf](https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF11546/IF11546.9.pdf)

successful criminal prosecutions, nearly 43,000 suspensions and debarments, and an astounding \$147 billion in investigative receivables and recoveries.<sup>70</sup>

In 2025 alone, OIGs issued 1,999 audit, inspection, and evaluation reports, and their investigations led to 4,014 indictments and the production of charging documents. The OIGs processed 825,027 hotline complaints and completed 15,916 investigations. Their investigations led to 3,957 successful prosecutions, 1,332 civil actions, 3,804 suspensions or debarments, and 3,091 personnel actions. Their work resulted in improvements to the economy and efficiency of government programs with potential savings of more than \$65 billion, including \$45 billion in audit recommendations, and \$20.6 billion from investigative receivables and recoveries. The federal government obtained an estimated \$17 return on investment for every dollar invested in inspector general offices.<sup>71</sup>

All of this is at risk due to President Trump's hostile actions against the OIG community.

### **THE BATTLE FOR LEGITIMATE NONPARTISAN OVERSIGHT WILL CONTINUE**

Public Citizen spoke to seven former Inspector Generals who were fired by President Trump. Combined, these IGs have nearly two hundred years of experience investigating fraud and corruption both in and out of government. Some former IGs are worried that Trump may attempt to "weaponize" OIGs against his political enemies, as he has already done with the Department of Justice.

"The thing that keeps me up at night is the chilling effect on our government's oversight mechanisms this has had," says former IG Mark Greenblatt, referring to the combination of various actions the Trump administration has taken against the OIG community. "The vast majority of the work in an IG's office is conducting routine audits," observes Greenblatt. "That is not very controversial. But a small percentage of the work is looking at alleged misconduct by senior agency officials or reviewing sensitive programs. Are IGs going to be gun shy about accountability in those areas?" asks Greenblatt. "That is my biggest concern," he says. Other former IGs agree.

"It was a planned attack on the oversight mechanisms of the U.S. government," says another fired Inspector General, referring to Trump's mass firing of IGs in January 2025. "Everyone in the OIG community is now looking over their shoulder," he said. "It is like a sniper is standing over you and you do not want to stand up and get shot. If a shot comes your way you duck. It's human nature."

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<sup>70</sup> See: compilation of COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GENERAL ON INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY (CIGIE) Annual Reports to the President and Congress from FY2015 to FY2024, <https://www.oversight.gov/>

<sup>71</sup> "Annual Report to the President and Congress Fiscal Year 2025," COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GENERAL ON INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY (CIGIE) February 3, 2026, [https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2026-02/CIGIE\\_2025\\_Annual\\_Report\\_to\\_the\\_President.pdf](https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2026-02/CIGIE_2025_Annual_Report_to_the_President.pdf)

Another former IG fears a more dangerous abuse of OIG powers. “My ultimate concern is the risk that the OIGs may become weaponized in some way,” he says. This former IG and others worry that Trump may attempt to use coopted OIGs as political weapons against his opponents, as he has already done with the Department of Justice.

Yet, they still have hope that the existing nonpartisan IGs can successfully rebuff potential future attacks by President Trump. They don’t believe the battle is over, but they certainly worry about the ability of OIGs to continue to conduct their jobs as they have in the past five decades in a nonpartisan and independent manner with Donald Trump and his administration threatening, intimidating and interfering with the independence of the Inspectors General.