

July 12, 2018

President Donald Trump  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I am writing to urge you to nominate qualified candidates to fill the four vacant presidentially appointed offices of inspectors general (IGs).<sup>1</sup> The IG offices at the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of the Interior, and the Tennessee Valley Authority need permanent leadership to best develop long-term strategic planning priorities and to ensure accountability in those federal agencies.

For decades, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) has advocated for strengthening the work of inspectors general; this includes enforcing their independence, honing their focus on work that has the largest impact, improving the quality of their communications with whistleblowers, and making sure their vital work of keeping our government accountable and effective does not go unnoticed by policymakers. We at POGO know that these goals cannot be accomplished without the consistent nomination of strong IG candidates.

The Inspector General Act of 1978 was signed into law in the wake of the Watergate affair with the promise that IGs would, in part, promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of federal agencies as independent watchdogs. But our work shows time and time again that permanent IGs are needed for these independent entities to function at their full potential and to make substantial and lasting impact.

Vacancies of permanent inspectors general is not a new problem or one that is unique to your Administration; this issue has persisted for years under both Democratic and Republican leadership. The inspector general position at the Department of the Interior, for example, has lacked a nominee for 3,426 days—nine years—as of today's date.<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, bipartisan members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee sent a letter to then-President Obama asking him to nominate qualified candidates to serve in vacant IG offices. In its letter, the Committee pointed out that the lack of permanent IGs

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<sup>1</sup> There are currently 13 IG offices lacking a permanent Inspector General. Of these 13, 4 are IGs that must be appointed by the President with confirmation by the Senate. <http://www.pogo.org/tools-and-data/ig-watchdogs/go-igi-20120208-where-are-all-the-watchdogs-inspector-general-vacancies1.html> (Hereinafter, Where Are All the Watchdogs).

<sup>2</sup> The Interior Department Inspector General position has been vacant since February 23, 2009. Where Are All the Watchdogs.

“impedes the ability of these offices to identify and expose waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government”, and that “acting IGs in these roles create the potential for conflicts of interest, diminish independent IG oversight, and cause instability for IG offices.”<sup>3</sup>

We couldn’t agree more with Senator Chuck Grassley, who noted: “President Trump will be able to choose nearly a third of the IG community, and he should focus on filling those positions quickly rather than wait for years like the Obama administration did with some vacancies. Independent, nonpartisan IG’s can be some of the president’s best allies in finding and cutting waste, fraud and abuse in the bureaucracy.”<sup>4</sup>

As discussed in POGO’s recent report, *The Watchdogs After Forty Years: Recommendations for our Inspectors General*, “a permanent IG has the ability to set a long-term strategic plan for the office, including establishing investigative and audit priorities. An acting official, on the other hand, known by all IG office staff to be temporary, may tend to lack direction or vigor.”<sup>5</sup>

A well-functioning and well-funded IG office is hugely beneficial to those who stand to benefit from their work. In fact, most IG offices end up saving the government much more than they cost to operate.<sup>6</sup> The work of IGs results in a reported return-on-investment (ROI) of about seventeen dollars for every dollar spent on IG funding.<sup>7</sup> For cabinet-level IGs, that figure is even higher, at about twenty-three dollars.<sup>8</sup> These numbers are significant and show that most IGs are revenue positive. However, to maximize their benefits and achieve these kinds of positive results, it is imperative that the IG offices be led by permanent appointees.

We recognize that this is not an issue that is unique to the executive branch. As you know, most of your nominees need to go through the Senate confirmation process, which can delay things further.<sup>9</sup> However, you are in a unique position to make great strides toward solving this

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to President Barak Obama regarding vacant inspector general positions, March 24, 2015, p. 1. [https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/65169b36-d53a-4ec4-b2a7-b384f8243ce6/hsgac-letter-potus-re-ig-vacancies.pdf](https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/65169b36-d53a-4ec4-b2a7-b384f8243ce6/hsgac-letter-potus-re-ig-vacancies.pdf) (Downloaded July 11, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Steven Mufson and Juliet Eilperin, “Trump transition team reverses course on warnings to oust inspectors general,” *The Washington Post*, January 19, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/trump-transition-reverses-course-on-warnings-to-remove-inspectors-general/2017/01/19/09312a12-ddfa-11e6-918c-99ede3c8cafa\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.00ea32451596](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/trump-transition-reverses-course-on-warnings-to-remove-inspectors-general/2017/01/19/09312a12-ddfa-11e6-918c-99ede3c8cafa_story.html?utm_term=.00ea32451596) (Downloaded July 11, 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Project On Government Oversight, *The Watchdogs After Forty Years: Recommendations for Our Nation’s Federal Inspectors General*, July 9, 2018, p. 13. [http://docs.pogo.org/pdf/report/2018/2018-07-09\\_POGO\\_The\\_Watchdogs\\_After\\_40\\_Years\\_IG\\_Report.pdf](http://docs.pogo.org/pdf/report/2018/2018-07-09_POGO_The_Watchdogs_After_40_Years_IG_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> John Hudaj and Grace Wallack, “Sometimes cutting budgets raise deficits:

The curious case of inspectors’ general return on investment,” The Brookings Institute, April, 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CEPMHudakWallackOIG.pdf> (Downloaded July 12, 2018)

<sup>7</sup> Statement of Michael E. Horowitz, Chair, Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice, before the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, November 15, 2017, p. 2. <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Horowitz-CIGIE-Chair-DOJ-IG-Statement-11-15.pdf> (Downloaded July 12, 2018)

<sup>8</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Inspectors General: Additional Efforts Needed by the Department of Commerce OIG to Address Audit Coverage, Hotline Operations, and Employee Concerns* (GAO-15-260), June, 2018, p. 9. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/680/670735.pdf> (Downloaded June 26, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> There are currently 6 presidential IG nominations pending in the Senate. Where Are All the Watchdogs.

problem; as President, you are the only person who can nominate “Establishment” inspectors general for Senate vetting,<sup>10</sup> and nomination is half the battle.

These inspectors general are essential watchdogs who ensure that taxpayer money is being spent effectively and efficiently, and prevent harm to health, security, safety, and constitutional rights. POGO therefore urges you to nominate qualified leaders to serve in these vacant IG positions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Danielle Brian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Danielle Brian  
Executive Director

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<sup>10</sup> The Inspector Act of 1978, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. § 3(a).