



# **Chairman Robert Aderholt**

*Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Office of the Inspector General Hearing  
Opening Statement As Prepared  
March 15, 2018**

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The Subcommittee will come to order.

Good morning. Welcome to the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee's second hearing to review the fiscal year 2019 budget request of \$87.4 million, a decrease of \$10.8 million, from the FY 2017 level of \$98.2 million for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Inspector General.

Ms. Fong, I would like to thank you for being with us today. I believe this marks your sixteenth straight year that you have appeared before this Subcommittee as the Inspector General for USDA. We also want to welcome back to the Subcommittee Gil Harden, Assistant Inspector General for Audits and Ann Coffey, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations. We certainly acknowledge that we have a deeply experienced team at the OIG, and we always appreciate this opportunity to discuss the ongoing challenges faced by the Department as well as the progress that is being made to correct any problems, policies, or practices that may be of concern to your organization.

As I have done in past years, I want to take this opportunity to outline my goals for the Subcommittee as we conduct our oversight responsibilities and craft the Agriculture Appropriations bill for FY 2019. The first goal is to Bolster Prosperity and Economic Well Being in Rural America and the Farm Economy; the second is to Conduct Fair and Transparent Oversight of Agency Activities and Public Resources; the third is to Promote Economic Growth through Effective and Efficient Regulation and Minimization of Regulatory Overreach; and the last goal is to Protect the Health and Safety of People, Plants, & Animals.

The work you do at the OIG covers so many different aspects of the lives of all Americans, and it ties into the goals of this Subcommittee, especially in regards to conducting fair and transparent oversight of agency activities and public resources.

Your job is incredibly important to the integrity and success of this Department. The U.S. taxpayer should also be supportive of your work due to the risk exposure of USDA's financial activities. USDA touches the lives of most Americans in one way or the other. Its portfolio includes over \$200 billion in assets, \$154 billion in annual spending, and more than \$100 billion in loans and crop insurance.

Yet for all of this responsibility, the Inspector General only has a fraction of the entire USDA budget to oversee the vast resources and programs of the Department. Ms. Fong, your work speaks for itself. Year over year, the total dollar impact the Inspector General's investigations (which includes indictments, convictions, arrests, sanctions, and reports with recommendations) had on the efficiencies and savings of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's programs and funding grew by 83 percent.

Among other things, I plan to discuss issues related to your audits and investigations ranging from oversight of activities disaster response following Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria; USDA's nutrition assistance programs; purchase cards; agro-terrorism; and scientific integrity.

The Subcommittee would also like to highlight the fact that you have once again received outstanding recognition for your excellent work amongst the IG community. You received two Audit Awards for Excellence in 2017 for your work evaluating SNAP Administrative Costs and the operations of the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center. This recognition came from the Council for Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, which encompasses the entirety of the IG community across the federal government. I extend my congratulations for these achievements.

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