

**“Oversight of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency”**  
**Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce**  
**2:00 PM, Tuesday, July 23, 2024**  
**Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

I welcome this Subcommittee returning its oversight focus to federal inspectors general (IGs) and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). When I served as Chair of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, the Subcommittee had an active portfolio and prolific record on the subject of IGs, as well as the work of CIGIE. That was partly due to the important role IGs play in helping Congress conduct thoughtful, sober oversight of the federal government, and partly due to the Trump Administration’s war on IGs that necessitated a dedicated defense of the independence and integrity of our federal watchdogs.

Federal inspectors general were first established by Congress in the Inspector General Act of 1978. Inspectors General help Congress uncover waste, fraud, and abuse at federal agencies, and help agencies find efficiencies that can improve service to the American public. Through audits, evaluations, and investigative recoveries, IGs have identified more than \$93 billion in potential savings on a \$3.5 billion investment in IG budgets. That is a \$26 return on every dollar spent on federal IGs.

To maintain the trust and authority necessary to conduct their important oversight mission, IGs must remain as pure as the driven snow. CIGIE, which is comprised of active IGs, helps hold the IG community to the highest professional and ethical standards. CIGIE’s Integrity Committee, which was authorized by Congress, fields and investigates allegations of wrongdoing against IGs and certain senior officials within Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs).

Unfortunately, this system of self-policing has not always worked, due both to failures on the part of CIGIE, and due to attacks on CIGIE’s legitimacy and authority as an independent investigative body.

For example, a previous Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) collaborated with Republican Congressional staff to curate and issue a report that left the impression the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) was intentionally and singularly targeting tea party organizations inappropriately operating under 501(c)(4) status. As it turned out, the IRS was actually investigating both progressive and tea party organizations through an equal application of the law. The TIGTA, however, chose not to include the fact that progressive organizations were also being evaluated in the scope of his investigation. Representative Matt Cartwright and I filed a complaint against the TIGTA with the Integrity Committee, but we received no justification for why our complaint was not fully adjudicated or how the TIGTA responded to our serious concerns about the quality and integrity of his work.

In response to this experience, I was proud to author and enact the Integrity Committee Transparency Act, which was included in the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act. The bill expanded the Integrity Committee’s reporting requirements to Congress, including requirements that the Integrity Committee report to a Member of Congress who has filed a complaint why the Committee chose not to refer for investigation their allegations of

wrongdoing. This reform will help maintain trust and transparency in the relationship between Congress and the IG community.

Unfortunately, CIGIE has also been a target of attack from within the IG community. Recently, several federal IGs, including former Federal Housing and Finance Agency IG Laura Wertheimer, former Social Security Administration IG Gail Ennis, and current Department of Homeland Security IG Joseph Cuffari have either obstructed or refused to recognize the investigative authority of CIGIE and the Integrity Committee. When this first occurred in the Wertheimer case, I encouraged CIGIE to work with me on legislation that makes crystal clear Congress intends for CIGIE to be vested with the necessary authorities to conduct unimpeded investigations into OIG wrongdoing. At the time, CIGIE opposed such legislation. It is my hope, after successive challenges to its authority, that CIGIE has changed its tune and wants to work with Congress to reiterate what should be black letter law.

The good news is that these cases of resistance and obstruction are only occurring because CIGIE is doing its job – holding bad IG actors to account. We must empower CIGIE to carry out its mission, and I look forward to hearing from CIGIE Chair, Department of the Interior Inspector General Mark Lee Greenblatt, on how we can once again collaborate to strengthen CIGIE as an overseer of the overseers, and ensure federal IGs remain purer than the driven snow.