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Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch

**Request to Strengthen and Preserve Access to Inspector General Reports**

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Chair Valado, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to offer this written testimony regarding ways to strengthen the first branch of government as articulated in our Constitution. I am the Director of the Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy, which is part of Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan.

The Levin Center was established over 10 years ago to honor the legacy of Senator Carl Levin who, during his long career representing Michigan in the Senate, championed fact-based, bipartisan oversight and civil discourse. Senator Levin said, “Good government requires good oversight.” He appreciated that the Supreme Court has long recognized Congress’ need for information to carry out its constitutional responsibilities. Nearly 100 years ago, in an 8-0 opinion upholding a congressional subpoena seeking information related to the Attorney General, the Supreme Court wrote: “[T]he power of inquiry—with process to enforce it—is an essential and appropriate auxiliary to the legislative function. . . . A legislative body cannot legislate wisely or effectively in the absence of information.”

Since 2015, along with the Project on Government Oversight and the Lugar Center, we have offered “Oversight Boot Camps” twice a year for House and Senate staff from both political parties and from both committee and personal offices and to produce a nonpartisan,

bicameral experience. To date, more than 500 congressional staff have completed our instruction on how to do fact-based, bipartisan, in-depth investigations.

I had the privilege of testifying last year on several reforms that we believe could address Congress' ability to conduct fact-based, bipartisan oversight. Those suggestions included: 1) requiring bipartisan committee websites, 2) encouraging bipartisan reports, and 3) requiring the appointment of bipartisan administrative personnel in oversight committees. We believe all three are as important as ever and will strengthen the role of Congress, save taxpayer dollars, and increase accountability in government. We continue to urge your consideration and adoption of them.

Today, however, I am writing to support making all Inspector General (IG) reports available on the Government Printing Office (GPO) website. Repeating what you already know - - IG's are a critically important element in Congress' ability to oversee federal programs and to fight waste, fraud, and abuse. Whatever we can do to strengthen their capacity and to expand their influence and reach, Congress should do -- in the public interest. One way to do that is to ensure that the public and congressional staff have access to their reports on an ongoing basis.

IG's are required by law, as you know, to send their reports simultaneously to both the head of the agency in which they are housed and to Congress. With exceptions for classified and personal information, most IG's also post their reports on their websites. And Oversight.gov, which is operated by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), is the central location for IG reports. But without an explicit congressional directive, the funding for Oversight.gov relies on executive branch support. If that support were withdrawn, the most important central repository for IG reports could go dark at some point and for some time. This would be a serious disservice to both Congress and the public.

The Government Publishing Office (GPO) is required to publish and preserve government documents and has been doing so for decades. It is well equipped to obtain, maintain, and make available to the public IG reports on an ongoing, reliable basis. It is for this reason and our concern for full and ongoing access to IG reports that we urge the subcommittee to include language in the FY 2027 Legislative Appropriations bill to direct the GPO to establish a process by which IG reports can be stored and made available on GPO's website. Doing so will ensure that the work of IG's is permanently and publicly accessible.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.