INSPECTOR GENERAL NOMINATION, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DENNIS DEAN KIRK HEARING TESTIMONY

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

November 19, 2026

Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you on my hearing for confirmation to serve as the Inspector General of the United States Department of the Interior.

My sincere thanks to the folks at the Office of Inspector General that helped me to prepare to present this testimony for you, and to President Trump for nominating me for this important position.

The Office of Inspector General has about 220 employees in its offices across the United States. It provides oversight investigations, audits, inspections, and evaluations to promote the Department of the Interior's efficiency and effectiveness and to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The OIG helps the Department look at a vast array of services to the American taxpayers, visitors, and users of its areas of interest, which comprise about 20 percent of all lands in the United States. The Department of the Interior also has over 53,000 employees. Where employees, the public and Congress report or OIG work identifies violations of law, rules, regulations, waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and specific substantial dangers to public safety, it will receive immediate IG attention and full consideration, such as protecting whistleblowers against retaliation, reprisals, and retribution.

If confirmed, I pledge to ensure the IG office will follow best practices in recommendations, oversight, improvements, and modernization; enforce fair treatment and safety for whistleblowers; and always work to ensure a workplace free from prohibited personnel practices.

As a proven strategic innovator with years of successful experience in myriad roles, if confirmed I will develop and implement creative, rapidly effective solutions to complex problems that may arise. For example, I will continue to recruit, hire, train, educate, and deploy into effective and efficient public service at the OIG offices the very best team of a qualified pool of federal workers. This will ensure best practices and effective public services to the taxpaying public, so OIG can exhibit the highest standards while conducting public service.

I have a track record of successful leadership. The Secretary of the Army put me in the Office of General Counsel and delegated me as the first Associate General Counsel for Strategic Innovation and Business Transformation. I saved the Army millions of dollars for the taxpayers during two sustained conflicts through my creative efforts and innovative techniques. I recruited a specially selected team, designed and deployed major business transformations, and developed efficient, economical improvements to civilian/military personnel operational systems. Likewise, in the Office of Director of National Intelligence, I was appointed by the DNI to be the Chief Operating Officer, where with my experience, innovation and business analytical techniques, I saved millions of dollars for the taxpayers by designing, implementing, and consistently delivering efficient and economical structures and business improvements, with my select team of COO staff, though coming into the position under severe constraints. Such incredibly difficult challenges ultimately resulted in successful outcomes that could not have been accomplished without the teamwork and support of our excellent public servants executing on my identified improvements and creative solutions to almost intractable problems.

The mission I am taking to heart is for the Inspector General of the Department of the Interior to uphold, support, and defend public trust. The IG does that by ensuring the Department of the Interior and all that is within its purview and domain operates lawfully, efficiently, effectively, and in the stated American values and best traditions of public service. If confirmed as IG, I will ask the tough questions, seek the facts and truth in every inquiry, study improvements and efficiencies in the work of the Department of the Interior, provide reports on the OIG's work to Congress the Department of the Interior Administration, and provide frontline personnel essential tools and leadership support in the daily fight to serve the American public faithfully. I have considerable public service in leadership, administration of government systems, business transformation, studying efficiencies and economical improvement by asking the toughest questions, and getting solutions to prevent waste, fraud, abuse and protecting whistleblowers. I am not constrained nor obligated to any biased institutional culture or bias, nor confined to any improper restrictions from any institution or entity that might sway the independence and freedoms of action the IG office requires for successful services.

That gives me a clear independence of thought and a focused perspective for successful means, methods, and actions to serve all the IG office needs with thoughtful objectivity.

It is a great honor and privilege to again hear the call to serve the United States especially in such challenging and noble function. I am happy to take any questions and provide answers within my best abilities and present level of knowledge about the Interior IG.