

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Safeguarding Inspector General Independence and Integrity
October 21, 2021

Thank you to each of our witnesses for being here today and for your service to our nation. You have extremely challenging jobs to ensure that government is working effectively and efficiently for the American people.

I look forward to hearing from each of you on how this Committee can ensure the independence and integrity of Inspectors General as you continue this work.

As current federal watchdogs, your perspective will be critical in helping us finalize legislation that will provide you and your colleagues with protections to strengthen independent oversight of the government's effectiveness.

This legislation is long overdue. For decades, Inspectors General have acted as independent, nonpartisan watchdogs tasked with helping Congress prevent and uncover fraud, waste, and abuse in the federal government, and ensure taxpayer dollars are being used appropriately.

The Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's recent annual report to Congress estimated that Inspectors General saved American taxpayers more than \$50 billion last year alone.

It's absolutely vital that our federal watchdogs are able to work independently and without the threat of political interference. Current law allows for actions that threaten to undermine this independence, including the removal of Inspectors General from office without sufficient explanation, and the appointment of partisan political operatives to serve in these traditionally nonpartisan roles.

These actions, and others, have left Inspectors General, and their critical work, vulnerable to political influence. That is unacceptable.

We must ensure that no Administration is able to undercut the independent transparency and accountability that Inspectors General provide to the American people.

That is why Ranking Member Portman and I are working together to enact the first significant reforms to support Inspectors General in more than 13 years. I'm proud our bipartisan, bicameral effort enjoys broad support from our colleagues and numerous good government groups.

I'm grateful to Senators Grassley and Hassan, as well as House Oversight Chairwoman Maloney, for helping us create these reforms, which will require a more detailed explanation from the President before removing an Inspector General, ensure that acting Inspectors General are selected from a pool of senior-level employees within the watchdog community, and provide federal watchdogs the authority to subpoena the testimony of contractors and former federal officials.

Through these commonsense solutions, this committee has the opportunity to consider and advance historic, meaningful reforms that strengthen our democracy and promote independent oversight, a goal I know we all share.

I look forward to discussing how we can best protect our Inspectors General and swiftly pass these urgently needed reforms.