

Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper
Nomination of John Roth to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
January 8, 2014

As prepared for delivery:

During my years of service on this committee, we've examined a number of management and other challenges made worse by a lack of leadership at federal agencies. Last year - my first as the committee's chairman - I made it one of my top priorities to work with the administration to fill key positions throughout government, particularly at the Department of Homeland Security. I did this because experience shows that we simply cannot expect results from any organization - federal agencies included - without strong leaders in place.

So as we begin a new year, I couldn't be happier that DHS once again has a Senate-confirmed Secretary and Deputy Secretary in place. Today, we continue the progress we've made in filling vacancies at the Department considering the nomination of John Roth to be Inspector General.

The DHS Office of Inspector General has been without a permanent leader for nearly three years. That is inexcusable for an office that is so vital to the work of the Department and the Congress. Inspectors General are an essential component of government oversight. They can help reveal and prosecute wrongdoing, provide invaluable support to Congressional budgeting and oversight work, and promote the integrity and efficiency of government.

This Committee builds on the work of the DHS Office of Inspector General, as well as the Government Accountability Office to help the Department more effectively and efficiently achieve its critically important missions. We need to strengthen management and accountability, work to better unify DHS, and continue on our quest to get better results for less money. There is only so much this Committee, the Government Accountability Office, or the Office of Inspector General can do alone. But if we all work together, we can help the Department make real progress on its key challenges.

I know the Office of the Inspector General is not always seen as an ally by management, but good leaders should welcome constructive criticism to help improve performance. That is particularly true for DHS, which faces a vital and extremely challenging mission and is still coming of age as a department.

DHS'OIG itself is also in need of leadership and a fresh start, after a turbulent period that has raised questions about the integrity of the office's work and has undoubtedly shaken morale within the office. Indeed, a recent survey of government employees conducted by the Partnership for Public Service showed employee satisfaction within the Department's OIG falling off markedly in 2013, after a relatively solid showing in prior years.

So the role of Inspector General at DHS is a challenging and important job, and I am pleased to see a strong nominee before us.

Mr. Roth grew up in the Detroit area and was educated there, including putting himself through college at Wayne State University – where he also attended law school. He spent most of his career at the Justice Department, where he was a seasoned prosecutor. Early on, he was an assistant United States Attorney in Detroit, then chief of the narcotics section in Miami. In 1999, he moved to Justice Department headquarters here in Washington and has held a succession of significant jobs, including chief of the asset forfeiture and money laundering section, chief of the fraud and public corruption section, and chief of staff to the Deputy Attorney General.

One of his few departures from the Justice Department was shortly after 9/11, when he was detailed to the 9/11 Commission and was the senior counsel and team leader of the Commission's team on terrorist financing. Since July 2012, he has led the criminal investigations office of the Food and Drug Administration, where he oversees a staff of close to 300 employees.

Along the way, he has earned the respect of an impressive array of employers and colleagues – including former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff, former Congressman and 9/11 Commissioner Lee Hamilton, Alice Fisher, the former Assistant Attorney General for the criminal division, and others. These and other individuals have written the Committee in support of this nomination and I will place their letters in the record.

These former colleagues praise Mr. Roth's intellect and work ethic, but also – and perhaps most importantly – his integrity. Inspectors General sit in a difficult and at times conflicting role. To be effective, it is critical that an IG's independence and integrity be beyond reproach. Based on these testimonials and more, I believe that Mr. Roth has met and will continue to meet this high standard.

During my meeting with Mr. Roth last month, I enjoyed learning about the nominee's background growing up in the Detroit area, his impressive career and his commitment to public service. I look forward to hearing more from him today on his experience and his ideas on how to improve the Office of Inspector General and, with it, the Department of Homeland Security.