

**Statement Of Ranking Member Tom Carper:  
“Nomination Of Michael J. Missal To Be Inspector General, U.S. Department Of Veterans  
Affairs, And The Honorable Carolyn N. Lerner To Be Special Counsel, Office Of Special  
Counsel”**

**Tuesday, January 12, 2016**

*As prepared for delivery:*

I want to thank both of our nominees and their families for being here today. My thanks as well to Senator Johnson for holding this hearing and moving forward quickly to consider these nominees.

Let me begin by welcoming back Carolyn Lerner, who is no stranger to this committee nor to the position to which she is nominated. The Office of Special Counsel, or OSC, has a number of very important functions. Around here, it is probably best known as the primary office for enforcing whistleblower protections.

Whistleblowers play an important role in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse in government. They're often the first to raise concerns and highlight instances where we can better serve the American people. The Special Counsel's Office plays an important role in ensuring that whistleblowers are heard and that they are protected after they speak up.

I have seen firsthand the good work of this office when they investigated allegations several years ago at the Port Mortuary in Dover. The work of the Office of Special Counsel led to disciplinary action against several people in leadership positions at the Base and to the reinstatement of the whistleblowers who had been retaliated against after revealing serious problems at the mortuary.

It is my understanding that, under your leadership, Ms. Lerner, these positive outcomes have become more frequent, and that your agency has markedly improved as a resource for whistleblowers. I look forward to hearing from you about what you and your team have accomplished, as well as to learn of your plans for continued improvement going forward.

Let me also welcome this morning Michael Missal and thank him for his willingness to be considered for the very important position of Inspector General at the VA.

As we all know, Inspectors General play an extremely important role in our government. Their work helps us save money, reveal and prosecute wrongdoing, promote the integrity and efficiency of government, and, hopefully, increase the confidence and faith that the American people have in our government.

Unfortunately, we have seen far too many IG positions, including the one Mr. Missal has been nominated to fill, sit vacant for far too long. In fact, the VA has been without a permanent Senate-confirmed Inspector General for more than two years.

In the past several years, the members of this Committee have joined together in sending a letters to the President urging him to nominate people to fill all IG vacancies, including one that specifically pointed out the importance of filling the VA IG vacancy. I want to thank the President for responding by sending the Senate a number of well-qualified nominees, including Mr. Missal, for consideration and I hope we will all continue to work together to reduce the number of these vacant positions.

Permanent leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General is long overdue and will go a long way toward providing stable leadership and oversight of the agency. I am pleased that we are moving quickly to consider Mr. Missal's nomination and I hope that the Senate will soon confirm him to this position that has been vacant for far too long so he can go to work on behalf of our veterans and the American people.

Again, thank you both for being here and for your willingness to serve. I look forward to hearing from you today.