

Nomination Hearing for Carol F. Ochoa
Nominee for Inspector General, General Services Administration
Opening Statement for Senator Heidi Heitkamp
June 17, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

Welcome, Mrs. Ochoa. Mrs. Ochoa, I enjoyed our discussion in my office. I want to thank you for being here today. You have a very impressive résumé, which reflects a commitment to public service that we all can appreciate. People with your accomplishments can choose to do many things and I, for one, am glad that someone like you seeks to use your talents for the betterment of our federal government and the country.

Before I go any further, I want to thank your family. We know that the nomination process takes commitment from not only the nominee, but also from family members, who take the nomination journey with you. The inspector general is a role that will have long hours and require ongoing sacrifice. Thankfully, you have a great support system.

The importance of inspectors general cannot be overstated. In many ways, inspectors general are the unsung heroes of agency oversight and accountability. The American public depends on inspectors general to remain independent and promote greater efficiency and effectiveness within federal agencies.

Offices of Inspectors General provide Congress with valuable insight, which we would otherwise not possess. One of the most important issues often mentioned during the nominations process is how a nominee plans to communicate with Members of Congress. We want to make sure our lines of communication with you work so that we are well-aware of emerging and ongoing issues at the GSA. Mrs. Ochoa, if you're confirmed, we want to be a resource for you and help as needed with moving issues through the pipeline. I want to work with you in making sure that effective agency oversight can occur.

Today, GSA is facing many issues relating to real property disposal, including employee management and acquisitions, just to name a few. We need a strong IG, who will conduct tough and thorough investigations. This kind of leadership will serve all of us—the full Committee, the Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management Subcommittee, and the Administration.

Congress relies heavily on the work of the GSA Inspector General. In this fiscal year, the GSA IG office has put released a number of audit reports on topics ranging from improper payments to vehicle allocation. GSA issues can impact the entire federal government. A strong GSA IG is critical to helping the entire federal government improve, not just GSA.

Mrs. Ochoa, over the last few months, I have been able to review your experience and accomplishments. I believe that your experience as a prosecutor demonstrates an allegiance to fairness and impartiality which will prove invaluable in a system where the number one priority is to ensure that the tax payers' funds are used in an efficient and effective manner. Further, your experience in the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General shows your dedication to the justice system. These are all qualities that are needed in a system that is crying out for a reduction in costs and waste.

You come to the Committee highly recommended by NASA's Inspector General, Mr. Paul Martin, and by the Department of Justice's Inspector General, Mr. Michael Horowitz. Former colleagues and supervisors have also sent letters advising the Committee of your skills and talents. Given your statement and background, Mrs. Ochoa, I feel as though you have a true appreciation for reducing waste and improving the effectiveness of the federal government.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to help move your nomination through the Senate. Thank you, again, for being here.