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before the

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on Government Operations

concerning

“Restoring Independence: Rebuilding Federal Offices of Inspectors General”

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Chairman Connolly, Ranking Member Hice, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today in my role as the Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, known as CIGIE. Since January 1, 2021, I have had the honor of serving as CIGIE’s Chair, and for 6 years prior to that I served as its Vice Chair. My testimony today will focus on actions to strengthen IGs’ independence and ensure they have the tools necessary to do their work; to protect whistleblowers, whose contributions are essential to effective oversight; and to hold IGs and their senior leaders accountable, to ensure the public’s trust in our work.

The past year was extremely challenging for the IG community. Like the rest of the country, most of our offices switched to 100 percent remote work in March, with many of us continuing to work from home to this day. Our auditors, investigators, attorneys, data scientists, program analysts and administrative professionals suddenly found themselves working across the kitchen table from their spouses, with many having to balance getting their work done with caring for toddlers or helping older children keep up with school via Zoom. This massive shift required immediate adjustments to work processes and techniques to enable our critical

oversight to continue. A few months later, our community was rocked when two Inspectors General were removed from their positions—an unparalleled occurrence in such a short period. That shock was compounded when political appointees were designated as Acting IGs at agencies, raising serious questions about the affected offices' ability to function independently and effectively.

Despite this tumult, our community remained focused on its vital mission. Working first from the office then from home, our auditors, inspectors, and evaluators issued more than 3000 reports. The work of OIG investigators and investigative attorneys led to more than 4000 indictments and informations and almost 1300 successful civil actions. In response to our recommendations, agencies made more than 4000 suspensions and debarments and took more than 3,500 personnel actions. Altogether, our work resulted in significant improvements to the economy and efficiency of programs governmentwide, with potential savings totaling approximately \$53 billion—a \$17 return on every dollar invested in the OIGs.

For accomplishments like this to continue and expand, action is necessary. My testimony will detail some of the steps CIGIE believes will help ensure our community's continued success.

Actions to Ensure the Independence of Inspectors General

As detailed in Inspector General Buller's testimony, CIGIE has identified several legislative actions that would strengthen IG independence. We are seeking essential changes to the *Vacancies Reform Act*, to ensure that Acting IGs have the independence of mind and appearance that is essential to be an effective IG. We are also seeking a requirement for congressional notification when an IG is placed on non-duty status, to ensure the integrity of the 30-day congressional notification required for the removal or transfer of an Inspector General. Finally, we recommend the creation of a governmentwide prohibition on the use of appropriated funds to deny an OIG access to agency records, along with a requirement to notify Congress when access is denied, to ensure that all OIGs have the benefit of these protections. In addition to those requests, I would like to highlight two areas in which CIGIE members are working to promote IG independence.

Filling IG Vacancies

One of the greatest challenges facing the IG community is the extensive list of vacant IG positions. As this Committee has long recognized, prolonged vacancies within OIGs undermine the critical oversight work being done within those offices. During the period of such vacancies, acting Inspectors General and career staff carry on the work of their offices, and they do it with the utmost professionalism. Nevertheless, a sustained loss of permanent leadership is not healthy for any office, particularly one entrusted with the important and challenging mission of an OIG. For this reason, ensuring that vacant IG positions are filled with exemplary individuals capable of helping their offices accomplish their vital missions through good times and bad is always one of CIGIE's highest priorities. At this point, with 13 vacant presidentially appointed IG

positions and 2 vacant agency head-appointed IGs, prompt action to fill those vacancies is imperative.

An examination of the length and nature of these vacancies makes the urgency of filling them clear. Four IG positions—at the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency¹, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Export-Import Bank—have been vacant since the Obama administration. The average vacancy for a presidentially appointed IG is more than 3 years, with the longest, for the IG at the Export-Import Bank, having lasted almost 7 years. Turning to the nature of the vacancies, during a time of pandemic, the position of IG at the Department of Health and Human Services has been vacant almost 2 years. And at a time of enormous investment in their agencies through the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan, IG positions at the Departments of Treasury, Education, and Labor are unfilled.

Congress has given CIGIE a role in filling these vacancies. The *Inspector General Reform Act of 2008* charged CIGIE with, among other things, submitting recommendations of individuals to the appropriate appointing authority for any vacant presidentially or agency head-appointed position described in the IG Act. To fulfill that responsibility, in January 2009 CIGIE’s Chair created the Inspector General Candidate Recommendations Panel. That Panel, which is led by CIGIE’s Vice Chair and includes one additional presidentially appointed and 3 agency head-appointed IGs, has worked with presidential administrations and agency heads since its inception to fulfill its responsibility to identify candidates “without regard to political affiliation and solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, or investigations.” CIGIE’s Chair and Vice Chair have met with senior officials in the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations to discuss the importance of filling IG vacancies in a timely fashion and the Council’s role in that process. CIGIE leadership has also sent letters focused on the need to confirm IG vacancies to the leaders of the Senate, and the previous CIGIE Chair testified on this topic in congressional hearings. In October of 2019, we launched an IG Vacancy Tracker on Oversight.gov to highlight critical information about the number and length of all IG vacancies. The Vacancy Tracker also links to information about the process of filling IG vacancies.

With respect to presidentially appointed IG vacancies, individuals who would like to be considered for such positions can express their interest directly to the Panel, which also received resumes of individuals from the White House. Prior to 2017, the Panel’s process generally involved reviewing a candidate’s resume and any additional information submitted by the candidate and providing feedback to the White House Counsel’s Office. In the spring of 2017, the White House Counsel’s Office asked the Panel to enhance the steps it took to review potential candidates by interviewing candidates. Recognizing the value of this additional effort, since 2017 and continuing to the present, the Panel has interviewed individuals interested in being considered for presidentially appointed IG positions before making any recommendations to the White House. Insights resulting from these conversations with potential candidates have

¹ On April 16, 2021, the White House announced its intention to nominate a candidate for this vacancy.

strengthened the process and the quality of the feedback the Panel is able to provide. The ensuing discussions about candidates with the White House have been robust and extensive. Panel interviews are conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams—a practice that will continue after the pandemic, given the challenge of coordinating the schedules of five Inspectors General and one candidate. The interviews usually last about an hour and consist of questions designed to probe the candidate’s understanding of the role of an Inspector General and challenges faced by IGs; leadership experience and philosophy; demonstrated ability in the disciplines noted in the IG Act; and other relevant issues. Following the interview, the Panel decides whether to recommend (or not recommend) the candidate for consideration for an Inspector General position. Through this process, CIGIE has provided dozens of recommendations to both the Trump and Biden Administrations for vacant presidentially appointed Inspector General positions.

The Panel also provides support to agency heads seeking to fill vacant Inspector General positions. As such vacancies are ordinarily filled competitively, the panel’s actions must be consistent with the federal hiring process, which limits the Panel’s ability to make recommendations to the appointing authority. In light of that limitation, the Panel has identified other ways to help agency heads identify the strongest possible candidates for the IG positions. Among other things, the panel has provided technical assistance on vacancy announcements for agency-appointed IG positions, reviewed and ranked applications received in response to such announcements, provided questions for candidate interviews and, in some cases, participated in those interviews. The panel has also assisted headhunters hired by agencies working to fill IG positions.

The processes developed by the Panel have enabled it to provide essential insights to the White House and agency heads as they fill critical IG vacancies. The Panel’s continued success depends on the willingness of future administrations to work with it. As Inspector General Buller details in her testimony, CIGIE supports codifying some of the actions taken by the Panel, including the interviewing of potential candidates for presidentially appointed IG positions, to ensure that they continue across future administrations. In light of the limitations of the Panel’s ability to submit recommendations for agency-head appointed IGs, CIGIE also supports providing the Panel with additional authority to “provide support” to designated Federal entities. Finally, CIGIE favors amendments to the IG Act that would provide transparency to Congress about the Panel’s role in this process, while still protecting the confidentiality of recommendations made to the White House.

Expanding and Strengthening IG Cooperation Memos

A strong message from agency leadership in support of the importance of cooperating with the Office of Inspector General can be an invaluable tool for OIGs. Such communications provide an outstanding opportunity for an agency head to:

- Clearly affirm the duty of agency personnel to cooperate with the OIG and report suspected instances of waste, fraud, and abuse;

- Outline the legal bases for the OIG’s authority to review agency programs and operations, including the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, which requires OIG’s to be given timely access to all agency records;
- Stress the independence of the OIG;
- Address whistleblower protections, the OIG’s commitment to confidentiality, and state that supervisors cannot prevent or retaliate against employees who report concerns or otherwise cooperate with the OIG;
- Describe the categories of information that should be reported to the OIG; and
- Provide clear guidance to agency employees on how they can report suspected instances of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Leadership at some agencies have issued statements along these lines, some for many years. Recognizing the need to strengthen agency/OIG relations after the events of the past year, CIGIE recently surveyed its members to determine the extent to which current or past agency leadership had issued such communications and identify effective examples of such statements. Based on the results of the survey, we are preparing a whitepaper that highlights the qualities of the strongest communications we received, as well as a template that OIGs can use to work with their agency heads to promulgate such a statement. We hope that this information will enable OIGs whose agencies have not previously made such statements get one in place, while also presenting OIGs that have such communications with information that could strengthen them. We hope to complete this project in May.

We recognize the Committee’s interest in these statements, as witnessed by the bipartisan letter sent last month by Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, Subcommittee Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, and Ranking Member Jody B. Hice to 23 agencies requesting their current policies for interacting with Inspectors General and cooperating with Inspector General investigations. We look forward to briefing the Committee on the results of this project when it is completed.

Former CIGIE Chair Michael Horowitz, Vice Chair Mark Greenblatt, and I discussed communications like these with the OMB transition team in January. We noted that a strong statement from the OMB Director in support of the value of IG oversight would be extremely powerful. In a hearing in February, the previous nominee for that position committed to working with OMB staff to issue written guidance to agency heads stressing the importance of complying with OIG investigations and information requests. We anticipate that that commitment will be shared by the next nominee, and we will share the whitepaper and template we have developed for our own community with OMB to facilitate that process.

Actions to Ensure IGs Have the Tools They Need to Do Their Work

Inspector General Buller’s testimony does an outstanding job identifying legislative opportunities to provide IGs with essential oversight tools. CIGIE continues to support granting all IGs testimonial subpoena authority. Currently, government employees can avoid speaking

with OIG auditors, inspectors, or investigators by quitting or retiring prior to being interviewed. The ability to obtain testimony from former government employees, as well as employees or officers of entities that do business with the government but are not required to provide information to OIGs, would ensure that OIG employees can obtain valuable information from these individuals, thereby strengthening the resulting audits, inspections, reviews, and investigations. The requested improvements to the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act would strengthen this underutilized tool, enabling OIGs to pursue fraudsters whose schemes fall below prosecutorial thresholds.

In addition to those priorities, I want to highlight legislation, the “*Inspector General Access Act*,” that cures a long-standing problem with the Department of Justice (DOJ) OIG’s jurisdiction. Although this legislation directly impacts only the DOJ OIG, it is important to our entire community because it reinforces the principles of independence and accountability that are critical to our work as IGs. Unlike all other OIGs, the DOJ OIG is statutorily prohibited from reviewing and investigating alleged misconduct by all of its Department’s employees. When DOJ attorneys act in their capacity as lawyers, the IG Act grants exclusive investigative authority to the DOJ’s Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), and not the DOJ OIG. As my predecessor as CIGIE Chair and current DOJ IG Michael Horowitz has told this Committee, OPR is a DOJ component that lacks the same statutory independence and protections that the OIG is provided by the IG Act. Last Congress, the House passed the bipartisan *Inspector General Access Act*, H.R. 202, without objection. In this Congress, Senators Richard Durbin, Mike Lee, and a bipartisan group of co-sponsors have introduced identical legislation in the Senate, and we encourage Congress to quickly pass this important legislation.

Actions to Protect Whistleblowers

Our work as IGs would be far less impactful without the information provided to us by whistleblowers. Indeed, in 2019, CIGIE issued a report that illustrated the importance of individuals coming forward to report waste, fraud, abuse, and misconduct to OIGs. That report, *Whistleblowing Works: How Inspectors General Respond to and Protect Whistleblowers*, provided a sample of OIG investigations, audits, and reviews that were initiated or advanced because of a whistleblower disclosure. The impact is remarkable – from improving veterans’ access to timely and high-quality health care to strengthening the integrity of our financial institutions and social security programs – whistleblowers who reported information to OIGs have saved the U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars and made government programs more efficient and effective.

In testimony before this Subcommittee last year, Inspector General Horowitz listed a number of initiatives that CIGIE has taken to ensure that whistleblowers are aware of their right to disclose evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse, and are also protected for doing so. Let me also summarize CIGIE’s efforts in this critical area of responsibility, as reflected in IG Horowitz’s testimony last year:

As part of CIGIE's effort to further enhance Oversight.gov, CIGIE worked with the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) to launch a new whistleblower protection web page, [Oversight.gov/Whistleblowers](https://www.oversight.gov/Whistleblowers). As this Committee well knows, the legal landscape for potential whistleblowers can be confusing, and the options available to individuals who want to blow the whistle, or who believe they have been retaliated against, depend on their specific place of employment. Recognizing this, the Oversight.gov/Whistleblowers page provides an interactive form to assist potential whistleblowers in determining where to make a protected disclosure or file a retaliation claim – to an OIG, OSC, or some other entity. The site provides informational resources for individuals in various sectors, including government employees, government contractors and grantees, those in the military, and private-sector individuals. CIGIE believes that these education and outreach efforts will help to ensure that whistleblowers are empowered to make lawful disclosures, and that disclosures will continue to contribute to OIG efforts to cut waste and improve government programs.

CIGIE has established training programs that align with our role of informing and supporting whistleblowers. CIGIE has conducted multiple training sessions for OIG personnel that focused on best practices for investigating whistleblower retaliation allegations.

CIGIE is also extending its expertise on hotline administration and management at the request of congressional stakeholders to assist these stakeholders in incorporating best practices in complaint response when whistleblowers report information directly to Congress.

CIGIE's Whistleblower Protection Coordinator (WPC) Working Group, which we launched in 2015, continues to meet quarterly, and is often joined by congressional and nongovernment stakeholders and OSC, to discuss approaches to education, outreach, and enforcement of whistleblower laws. In conducting these trainings and meetings, CIGIE is actively complying with the letter and spirit of the "Whistleblower Protection Coordination Act," which this Committee passed in 2018, and requires CIGIE to work with OSC and the WPCs to develop best practices for handling protected disclosures and enforcing whistleblower protection laws. A common discussion item for the Working Group is enforcement of the whistleblower protections for employees of government contractors and grantees, a shared responsibility of all OIGs, and one that is particularly important to my work at NSF OIG. Additionally, I recently asked the Working Group to develop recommendations for agencies to better comply with the requirement to inform all employees of contractors and grantees of their whistleblower rights and responsibilities; OIGs across the government have identified poor compliance with this notification requirement in numerous contract and grant audits and investigations.

In addition to its work to strengthen OIG whistleblower programs, the Working Group has recently been joined by the House of Representatives' Office of the Whistleblower Ombuds. Individual OIGs are also working with the House Whistleblower Ombuds to develop practices for congressional offices to engage most effectively with OIGs on whistleblower matters.

As CIGIE Chair, I want to ensure the Subcommittee that I will encourage all OIGs to prioritize internal whistleblower education for OIG employees. Just as we encourage agency employees to come forward to assist OIGs with our investigations, audits, and reviews, it is also critical that OIG employees feel empowered to blow the whistle and that they fully understand the process for making a disclosure and filing a retaliation complaint. I note that OIGs have historically been leaders in these internal education efforts, and nearly all OIGs have completed the U.S. Office of Special Counsel’s whistleblower certification process under 5 U.S.C. § 2302(c), often well before their agencies. I also support legislation, S. 587, the *Securing Inspector General Independence Act of 2021*, that would codify these and related internal education efforts, by requiring the Whistleblower Protection Coordinators to inform internal employees of their whistleblower rights and protections, including the process for filing a complaint or disclosure with CIGIE’s Integrity Committee.

Actions to Ensure the Accountability of Inspectors General and Their Senior Leaders

Just as Inspectors General oversee our agencies, we are committed to accountability within our own community, which is essential to maintain the public’s trust. For this purpose, Congress established within CIGIE an Integrity Committee (IC) to oversee Inspectors General and senior OIG officials and ensure that they “perform their duties with integrity and apply the same standards of conduct and accountability to themselves as they apply to the agencies that they audit and investigate.”² Service on the IC is among the most serious responsibilities asked of Inspectors General, and support for the IC and continued improvement of its processes is one of my highest priorities.

The IC is composed of four IGs, selected by the CIGIE Chairperson; a senior FBI official; and the Director of the Office of Government Ethics (or the Director’s designee). The IC elects one of the four IG members as IC Chairperson for a two-year term of office. Having served on the IC from 2012 until 2015, I can speak to the many improvements that have occurred since the *IG Empowerment Act* (IGEA) transferred full responsibility for the IC from the FBI to CIGIE. The IC is now more transparent, its oversight is more rigorous, it coordinates with the Office of Special Counsel on matters of mutual interest, and its workload has increased dramatically, in large measure because of the outreach conducted by the IC’s leadership.

Integrity Committee Review Process

The IC operates pursuant to policies and procedures required by the IG Act. Incoming complaints that involve officials under the IC’s purview are reviewed by a three-member panel of representatives from the IC, DOJ, and OSC. This diverse panel ensures that the equities of each agency are considered prior to referring the matter to the IC for review.

² Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Improving Government Accountability Act*, 110th Cong. (Sept. 27, 2007) (H. Rept. 110-354).

The IC meets every three weeks (18-19 meetings per year) to provide a prompt and independent review of each allegation referred to the IC by the panel. Before each meeting, the members review voluminous evidentiary materials so that they can engage in an informed discussion of the allegations and make fair, consistent, rigorous, and impartial decisions. It is not unusual for a meeting agenda to include 400 pages of records, and the IC has had several meetings with more than 800 pages of records.

The IC determines whether the allegations, if true, meet the IC's threshold for investigation: an abuse of authority in the exercise of official duties; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; a substantial violation of law, rule, or regulation; or conduct that undermines the independence or integrity expected of a senior OIG official.³ If so, the IC typically asks the subject for a thorough response, supported by evidentiary materials, as long as doing so would not compromise the identity of confidential complainants or witnesses. Often this process resolves some or all of the allegations. Once the record is complete, the IC refers any unresolved allegations to the Chairperson for investigation.

The IC Chairperson assigns the investigation to an impartial OIG of sufficient size to conduct a prompt, objective, and independent investigation. The investigators conduct their work at the direction of the IC Chairperson with the assistance of IC staff. At the conclusion of fieldwork, the investigating OIG prepares a draft report of its findings, which is shared with the IC and the subject, who may review and respond to it. On the basis of this complete record, the IC determines whether misconduct has been proven, explains the basis for its conclusions, and sends its findings and recommendations to the appointing authority for appropriate action and to the congressional oversight and authorizing committees.

Integrity Committee Challenges

Growth of the IC's caseload

The IC's work has increased steadily over the past 5 years. In 2020, the IC considered 81 matters, double the number that it handled in 2016. Moreover, the cases have grown increasingly complex, as the typical matter now combines multiple allegations and discrete facts. Often, new allegations come to light during an investigation, which must be pursued.

³ Application of the threshold standard ensures that the IC focuses its attention and resources on serious allegations that may call into question the fitness of an IG or senior OIG official. Many of the allegations referred to the IC do not meet this threshold. They may include management decisions within the reasonable discretion and authority of an IG or senior official; general disagreements with the outcome of a particular investigation or audit; routine employment disputes; misconduct by lower-level OIG staff not subject to the IC's authority; duplicative allegations; and the like.

The IC also investigates more cases. As of this hearing, the IC has nine matters under investigation, which may be a record level of activity.⁴ Halfway through the current fiscal year, the IC has issued four reports (or equivalent written products).

These cases demand increasing staff time and other resources. At an average cost of \$202,000 per investigation, the nine matters in progress at this time are projected to cost more than \$2 million. CIGIE currently dedicates two full-time staff members to support the IC: a senior counsel and a program manager. Overseeing these investigations requires enormous commitment from the IC's Chairperson, Kevin Winters. To the great benefit of the public, Mr. Winters, after a lifetime of service in the Marine Corps from which he retired as a Brigadier General, now performs two full-time jobs: IG of Amtrak and Chairperson of the IC. This situation is not sustainable in the long run, and we are exploring ways to alleviate it with additional support, such as adding a senior investigative attorney to the team.

Timeliness

The IGEA imposed aggressive time limits for the IC to review allegations and complete investigations, with monthly reporting to Congress of any extensions. The IC appreciates the importance of prompt action on the serious matters before it and makes every effort to meet a schedule that is more demanding than most OIG's achieve with respect to investigations of their agencies.

The IC continually undertakes steps to improve the efficiency of its processes, while simultaneously preserving the fairness and rigor of its work. Achievements in this area include the standardization of terms and requirements for OIGs performing investigations; improved guidance for complainants about the IC's purview and the information required for a clear, actionable complaint; and an expedited process for action on matters based chiefly on documentary evidence and which do not require extensive witness interviews. The IC and OSC have also concluded an agreement on the handling of matters in which both offices have equities.

While an investigation is ongoing, the IC Chairperson and staff carefully monitor its progress and press the investigators to adhere to the statutory deadlines, but it is not unusual for investigations to exceed the 150-day time-limit established by the IGEA. This occurs most frequently in investigations that are complex, involve multiple allegations, and require the assembly, review, and evaluation of substantial records and interviews of numerous witnesses and subjects, who may be represented by counsel. More time is often needed when new allegations arise and must be pursued. Some matters involve national security issues, with classified records, extending the time for review.

⁴ In one case, for efficiency, the IC has consolidated three discrete sets of allegations relating to the same office into a single broad-scope investigation.

The IG community recognizes the importance of holding ourselves accountable, and OIGs willingly assist the IC in its work. However, the additional demands on OIGs for oversight of CARES Act and American Rescue Plan funds leave many offices stretched thin, affecting their capacity to meet the IGEA's deadlines. Skilled investigators are in great demand, and offices report challenges in filling vacancies. The shortage of investigators may have a spillover effect on the timely completion of IC investigations.

Cooperation with IC investigations and access to information

The IC has recently confronted an unprecedented challenge to its authority from a particular office, in which the IG and senior officials under investigation refused to produce assertedly privileged documents and witness testimony to IC investigators. For many years, the IC has routinely sought and received potentially privileged materials, without incident, just as OIGs do within our own agencies. Here, senior OIG officials took the extraordinary position that a claim of privilege made their actions unreviewable, beyond any oversight or scrutiny. They were immovable, despite numerous efforts by the IC and CIGIE's leadership to get them to produce the materials sought by investigators, resulting in substantial delays and preventing the IC from reaching conclusions on important allegations. Nevertheless, the IC recently issued a report on the investigation.

Determined that this problem never occur again, the IC and CIGIE leadership informed the IG community of the issues underlying the dispute. CIGIE strongly reaffirmed the principle that OIG officials are and must be subject to the same oversight by the IC that we provide within our agencies and that the IC has the same plenary access to witnesses and information from OIGs that OIGs enjoy within their own agencies. With community concurrence, the IC has adopted an explicit policy recognizing that denying the IC access to information may be considered misconduct. In addition, the IC may expedite reporting such misconduct to the appointing authority for disciplinary action, prior to making any findings about the underlying allegations. I stand in solidarity with the IG community that IGs, too, must submit to scrutiny and be accountable for our actions. While there is a strong consensus among CIGIE members that the IC has the same investigative authorities as any individual OIG, it is a source of concern that there are individual within the OIG community who do not share that view.

Balancing transparency with maintaining the trust and confidence of whistleblowers and witnesses and the integrity of IC investigations

CIGIE and the IC are keenly aware of stakeholders' interest in the IC's work. Since responsibility for the IC was transferred to CIGIE, we have expanded the annual report to describe the kinds of allegations received in the past year; the positions of the persons against whom allegations were made; and the number of OIGs and individuals that were the subject of allegations. The report also states the number of matters considered by the IC, the stage of the process at which they were resolved and the status of the IC's docket as of year-end. Finally, the report shows the disposition dates of every matter and summarizes completed investigations. This level of

detail provides a thorough overview of the incoming allegations and how they were handled by the IC. In addition, the IC provides monthly reports to Congress on the status of any matters that have exceeded the IGEA's deadlines and responded to inquiries about them.

The IC has conducted numerous briefings for congressional staff, has assisted complainants and respondents in understanding the IC's processes, and conducted outreach to the IG community to ensure that CIGIE members understand how the IC works. The IC's leaders also brief new IGs and newly appointed Acting IGs as part of CIGIE's comprehensive orientation program. The IC's staff handles numerous *Freedom of Information Act* requests from the public and the media and has expanded its capacity to respond timely to them.

Transparency is a core value of CIGIE, which I strongly support. At the same time, however, we know that whistleblowers often hesitate to come forward with allegations against senior government officials. For this reason, IGs are obligated by law to protect their identities where feasible. The IC frequently receives allegations from insiders who express reasonable fears of retaliation should their identities be exposed, and it is not unusual for witnesses to convey reluctance on similar grounds when contacted by investigators. Like our individual OIGs, the IC's work depends on reporting by individuals who are exquisitely sensitive to the possibility of exposure. Any reporting on specific allegations or pending IC investigations that may inadvertently reveal confidential identities will undermine the very accountability that is the IC's overarching goal.

Premature disclosures about pending investigations may also influence witness testimony or facilitate interference by subjects or their allies. Just as our individual offices generally do not report on pending matters, it is generally imperative that the IC wait until a matter is concluded making any public disclosure.

Conclusion

For over 40 years, Inspectors General have worked tirelessly to ensure the integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness of their agencies' programs and operations. The trillions of dollars invested in those agencies in response to the economic and public safety crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have made the work of OIGs more relevant and important than ever. Thank you again for your strong bipartisan support for our community. I look forward to working closely with this Committee and the Administration to ensure that Inspectors General continue to be empowered to provide the independent, objective oversight for which they have become known, and which the taxpayers deserve.