



October 20, 2021

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chair, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs
442 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of National Taxpayers Union (NTU), the nation's oldest taxpayer advocacy organization, I write to you in regards to the October 21 hearing, "Safeguarding Inspector General Independence and Integrity." NTU has long considered the inspector general (IG) system to be an indispensable part of the government-wide effort to reduce wasteful spending and misuse or abuse of taxpayer dollars, and we wish to briefly reiterate our support for some excellent, bipartisan legislation within the Committee's jurisdiction in this session of Congress.

On May 21 of this year, NTU and the R Street Institute wrote to this Committee on the Securing Inspector General Independence Act (SIGIA) of 2021 (S. 587).¹ In our capacities as budget and spending watchdogs on behalf of the nation's taxpayers, our organizations wrote that SIGIA "would enhance IG protections by:

- Requiring Presidents to report, in a timely manner, more information to Congress than under current law when an IG is removed from their post or placed on non-duty status;
- Ensuring that, in most cases, any vacancies for an IG position are filled by a first assistant to the IG who is qualified for the position; and
- Requiring enhanced education in IG offices for how employees should handle whistleblower complaints that are internal to an Office of Inspector General."²

NTU wishes to reiterate its endorsement of SIGIA, which would better enable the nation's IGs to pursue allegations of wasteful or fraudulent spending, conduct investigations based on such allegations, and inform policymakers so that such breaches of taxpayer trust may not happen again. These initiatives are especially important in light of \$5 trillion in federal spending rapidly pushed out the door to respond to COVID-19 crises, and they will become even more important if lawmakers green-light several trillion dollars more in spending under reconciliation and infrastructure legislation.

¹ Lautz, Andrew. "NTU, R Street Endorse Bipartisan Senate Bill to Bolster Inspectors General." National Taxpayers Union, May 21, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.ntu.org/publications/detail/ntu-r-street-endorse-bipartisan-senate-bill-to-bolster-inspectors-general>

² *Ibid.*

In May 2021, NTU and R Street also wrote to the House Oversight and Reform Committee, highlighting several of the positive reforms in the IG Independence and Empowerment Act (H.R. 2662).³ Some of these positive reforms include:

- “Allowing the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) IG to investigate DOJ personnel, closing a long-troublesome loophole in federal law and better enabling the DOJ IG to call out abuse of power or undue political influence at the Justice Department; and
- Improving transparency at the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), a watchdog for the watchdogs that helps ensure the IG system continues to work effectively for taxpayers and is free from partisan or political bias.”⁴

We are also sensitive to some lawmakers’ concerns about the messaging that surrounded the introduction of the IG Independence and Empowerment Act. It is critically important that the nation’s IGs are *not* seen as political pawns for one party or another, but as independent watchdogs committed to protecting taxpayers regardless of the political implications. Accordingly, NTU believes it is essential that IG reforms considered by Congress this year have a bipartisan imprint, so that taxpayers of all political and ideological stripes understand that IGs are not in place to help either Republicans or Democrats but all Americans.

NTU stands ready to work with lawmakers in both parties to enhance IG protections, and we appreciate the great work on these issues conducted by both Republicans and Democrats in recent sessions of Congress. Should you have any questions, I am at your service.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lautz
Director of Federal Policy

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

³ Lautz, Andrew. “NTU, R Street Encourage Congress to Advance Bipartisan Inspector General Bill to Biden's Desk.” National Taxpayers Union, May 24, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.ntu.org/publications/detail/ntu-r-street-encourage-congress-to-advance-bipartisan-inspector-general-bill-to-bidens-desk>

⁴ *Ibid.*