



June 6, 2018

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable James Lankford
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government

The Honorable Heidi Heitkamp
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs,
Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and
Federal Management

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Tom Graves
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations, Subcommittee on Financial
Services and General Government

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations, Subcommittee on Financial
Services and General Government

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We are writing in regard to S. 2178, the *Inspector General Recommendation Transparency Act of 2018*. We strongly support this effort to improve the public's access to Inspector General (IG) reports and to establish a public repository of information about open IG recommendations, and believe that the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's (CIGIE) new website, [Oversight.gov](https://www.oversight.gov), provides an ideal platform to achieve both objectives. However, because CIGIE does not currently receive an appropriation from Congress,¹ it does not have a stable source of funding and resources to develop, operate, and maintain the publicly available database and centralized report website required under the bill. Therefore, for CIGIE to undertake the efforts envisioned in S. 2178, including a dynamic

¹ Resources for CIGIE activities are provided through interagency funding, which includes annual contributions from member IGs and tuition paid by recipients of CIGIE training. 5 U.S.C. App. § 11(c).

open recommendation database within the required timeframe,² and then to ensure the continued availability of such information in the future, CIGIE would require a modest initial appropriation to fund the development of the database, and additional modest amounts in subsequent years to fund its operation and maintenance.³

The IG community launched Oversight.gov at the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, providing for the first time a searchable public database for IG reports from across the federal government. The website currently houses more than 9,000 reports, and benefits from the participation of all IGs that publicly release reports. Oversight.gov can be used as a platform to host the database specified in S. 2178, as it already aggregates information submitted directly by the IGs into a public, online database. While Oversight.gov does not currently display information about open IG recommendations, with modest additional resources it can readily be adapted to create a recommendations database. Moreover, the purpose of the database required in S. 2178 is to better inform the public and policymakers in Congress and the Executive Branch about the actions agencies can take to improve their programs, and that purpose is consistent with the goals of Oversight.gov.

However, because CIGIE does not receive an appropriation from Congress, Oversight.gov was developed and is maintained in such a way as to effectively minimize CIGIE's substantive role and responsibilities in its daily operations.⁴ As we have discussed on a number of occasions with Congressional staff, that model simply would not work with an open recommendations database because CIGIE would need to play a far more active role in operating and maintaining such a webpage, including helping IGs ensure that the data remains current and accurate. Such a responsibility requires resources that CIGIE does not currently have to ensure the success of an information technology project of this kind.⁵ Therefore, S. 2178 would not only exceed the current design of the website, it would legally mandate operations that CIGIE cannot successfully undertake solely through its current funding mechanism, which relies entirely on voluntary contributions of its members.

To be clear, we strongly support the bill's goal of improving Congress's and the taxpayer's access to IG reports and recommendations. However, in order for CIGIE to do so, Congress will need to provide a modest, direct appropriation to CIGIE that would allow it to effectively create, operate, and maintain the publicly available database and centralized report website envisioned by S. 2178.

² The requirement for the open recommendation database must be implemented by CIGIE within 18 months of the first semiannual reporting period following enactment.

³ For comparison, of the funds Congress appropriated to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board from FYs 2010 – 2013, more than \$14 million per year was obligated for website design, content management, and related services, including of its widely praised website, Recovery.gov.

⁴ The lack of a direct appropriation also necessarily limited CIGIE's ability to include several design features that would further enhance Oversight.gov and its value to the public and policymakers.

⁵ As outlined in the [CIGIE Legislative Priorities letter for the 115th Congress](#), the IG community continues to believe that CIGIE would benefit from a direct appropriation to cover the entire costs of its operations.

Thank you for your continued support of CIGIE and its member IGs. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Horowitz
Chair
CIGIE



Kathy A. Buller
Chair
CIGIE Legislation Committee

cc:

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Joni Ernst, U.S. Senate