



Council of the
INSPECTORS GENERAL
on INTEGRITY and EFFICIENCY

February 24, 2017

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

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

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We write on behalf of the Inspector General community in strong support for reauthorization of the provisions of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 (WPEA), which are set to expire in November 2017. Offices of the Inspectors General (OIG) play a central role in detecting and deterring waste, fraud, abuse, and misconduct and ensuring the integrity and efficiency of government operations, and whistleblowers are critical to those efforts. Whistleblowers bring forward information about what they reasonably believe to be wrongdoing – in many cases providing information that might not be available from any other source -- enabling OIGs to look into myriad situations and to take or recommend appropriate actions. The importance of whistleblower disclosures to the OIGs is reflected by the inclusion in Section 7 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 of specific provisions providing for OIGs to receive and investigate employee complaints and to protect the confidentiality of those who come forward and, conversely, prohibiting reprisal against those who come forward to the OIGs with such information.

Throughout the OIG community, countless investigations and reviews have been initiated or facilitated by whistleblower disclosures, and the agencies we oversee and the American public are the beneficiaries of the whistleblowers' service on the front lines. For example, at the Department of Justice OIG (DOJ OIG), whistleblowers played a key role in providing

information of central importance in the review released in 2012 of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' Operation Fast and Furious and related matters, and in

bringing forward concerns about the Drug Enforcement Administration's aviation operations with the Department of Defense in Afghanistan that led to a 2016 audit finding that more than seven years after an aircraft was purchased for the program, expenses had exceeded \$86 million and the aircraft still did not fly, with the OIG audit resulting in 13 recommendations and more than \$11 million in questioned costs.

The WPEA expanded whistleblower protections in a number of important ways, and also amended the Inspector General Act to require the designation of Whistleblower Protection Ombudsmen in the offices of all Presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed Inspectors General. In differing ways reflecting their make-up and the diverse agencies they oversee, the OIGs have, through their whistleblower programs, educated agency employees across the federal government about the prohibitions on retaliation for making protected disclosures, and provided information to employees who have made or who are contemplating making disclosures about their rights and remedies against retaliation. At the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, we created a working group in early 2013 composed of OIG Whistleblower Ombudsmen from across the OIG community that meets on a quarterly basis to share information, discuss best practices and current issues, and host speakers from within and outside government, including leaders of non-governmental organizations active in the field. The working group also has fostered coordination and cooperation with the Office of Special Counsel, and played an important role in sharing information with Congressional members and staff about the OIGs' efforts and experiences in this area.

While all these efforts require substantial resources, as do the often complex reprisal investigations in which the OIGs increasingly are engaging, they are important in helping to foster an environment in which employees feel comfortable, informed, and protected in coming forward. Therefore, we strongly support reauthorization of these programs before the underlying section of the WPEA expires in November 2017, and we would be pleased to work with you and the bipartisan Whistleblower Caucuses to provide any information that would assist in that process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us, or DOJ OIG Deputy Inspector General and Whistleblower Ombudsperson Robert P. Storch at (202) 514-3435.

Sincerely,



Michael E Horowitz
Chair
CIGIE



Kathy A. Buller
Chair
CIGIE Legislation Committee

cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chair, Senate Whistleblower Caucus

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Co-Chair, Senate Whistleblower Caucus

The Honorable Rod Blum
Co-Chair, House Whistleblower Protection Caucus

The Honorable Mike Coffman
Co-Chair, House Whistleblower Protection Caucus

The Honorable Kathleen Rice
Co-Chair, House Whistleblower Protection Caucus

The Honorable Jackie Speier
Co-Chair, House Whistleblower Protection Caucus