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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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### Statement of Rep. Henry Waxman Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform H.R. 928, the Improving Government Accountability Act October 3, 2007

I rise in strong support of H.R. 928, the Improving Government Accountability Act. This is a bipartisan bill that was favorably reported by the Oversight Committee on August 2, 2007, with strong support from members across the political spectrum.

There is a simple reason why this bill has so much support: it strengthens the Inspectors General, who are the first line of defense against waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs.

The last six years have given us examples of Inspectors General at their best – and at their worst.

Stuart Bowen, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, has uncovered fraud and saved American taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. Clark Kent Erving and Richard Skinner, the former and current IGs for the Department of Homeland Security, have identified billions in wasteful spending in the new Department. Glenn Fine at the Department of Justice; Earl Delvaney at Interior; and Brian Miller at the General Services Administration have all reported courageously on abuses within the agencies they oversee.

These and other IGs have fought waste, fraud, and abuse and saved the taxpayers billions of dollars.

Yet there are also IGs who seem more intent on protecting their departments from political embarrassment than on doing their job. The Oversight Committee is investigating allegations that the State Department IG has blocked investigations into contract fraud in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Energy and Commerce Committee documented serious abuses by the former IG in the Commerce Department. And the Science Committee has identified serious questions raised about the close relationship of the NASA IG to agency management.

This bill strengthens the good IGs by giving them greater independence. Under this legislation, they can only be removed for cause, not for doing their job. And they will now have new budgetary independence.

At the same time, the legislation enacts in statute new mechanisms for holding bad IGs to account. The legislation establishes an “Integrity Committee” that will investigate allegations that IGs have abused the public trust.

There have been several key champions of the legislation. Rep. Cooper has worked tirelessly on this issue for years and deserves our thanks for his efforts. I would also like to acknowledge Subcommittee Chairman Towns for his tremendous leadership in moving this legislation forward and Ranking Member Tom Davis for his commitment to strong IGs and his many helpful contributions.

H.R. 928 would make needed improvements to the IG Act and I urge members to support it.