

Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins

"Strengthening the Unique Role of
the Nation's Inspectors General"

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
July 11, 2007

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The Inspectors General in the federal government perform invaluable services for the people of the United States.

They serve the taxpayers' interest in making government operations more efficient, effective, and economical. They assist Congress in performing its oversight duties and in determining when investigations or legislative reforms are in order. They detect and report criminal activity. They alert agency heads to problems within their organizations.

In its most recent report, the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency reported that the work of Inspectors General has resulted in:

- **\$9.9 billion in potential savings from audit recommendations;**
- **\$6.8 billion in investigative recoveries;**
- **6,500 indictments;**
- **8,400 successful prosecutions;**
- **7,300 suspensions or debarments; and**
- **4,200 personnel actions.**

The IGs have undertaken major investigations. To cite just a few of many possible examples,

- **The DHS IG investigated waste, fraud, and abuse in the wake of Hurricane Katrina – an effort that ultimately revealed a loss of taxpayer funds exceeding a billion dollars.**

- **The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction not only uncovered nearly \$2 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse, but also detected criminal activity in contracting that led to four convictions.**

- **Just last week, the DHS Inspector General reported that FEMA has not applied minimum security standards to its laptop computers and has not implemented an adequate inventory-management system. These findings indicate continuing vulnerability to equipment and data theft,**

as well as exposure to computer viruses and hackers.

- **And, to cite the work of one of our witnesses, IG Glenn Fine has performed vital work monitoring the Justice Department's implementation of the Patriot Act and the FBI's use of national security letters, ensuring that the government's response to terrorist threats does not undermine civil liberties.**

Clearly, the Inspectors General that have been provided by statute for 64 federal entities perform a vital role. Whether they are working in Cabinet departments like Justice, Interior, or Defense, at the Export-Import Bank, or at the Postal Service, they are

indispensable watchdogs for auditing and improving government performance.

It is, therefore, important that we help to ensure that the Inspectors General are selected, compensated, protected, and empowered in ways that will enhance their services to our country.

I have authored legislation toward this end with the support of colleagues, including Senator Lieberman and Senator McCaskill.

My bill, S. 680, would take some important steps toward strengthening the role and the independence of our Inspectors General. For example, it would:

- **raise the pay of Presidentially appointed IGs to Level III while prohibiting cash bonuses from agency heads;**

- **provide that IGs appointed by agency heads be selected for their job qualifications, not their political affiliation;**
- **bolster the independence of IGs appointed by agency heads by requiring a 15-day notice to Congress of intent to terminate;**
- **strengthen the subpoena power of the IGs with respect to electronic documents; and**
- **grant all IGs the ability to use the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act to recover fraudulently spent money.**

Other members of Congress have also proposed changes to the laws on Inspectors General. All of this activity demonstrates an encouraging level of appreciation for and interest in the work of the IGs.

Today's hearing should be a valuable resource as we study our legislative options. Our witnesses bring to our hearing deep experience in the IG process as well as views from within and outside of government. I join the Chairman in welcoming the witnesses, and I look forward to hearing their observations.

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