



## **U.S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10a.m. (EDT), April 17, 2008**  
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### **STATEMENT BY ERIC M. THORSON, NOMINEE FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as the nominee to serve as the Inspector General of the Department of the Treasury. As someone who believes strongly in oversight and accountability, it is especially gratifying to be given the chance to serve in two different agencies as an Inspector General (IG). I am, at present, the IG of the Small Business Administration (SBA). That experience, for the last nearly two years, has prepared me well for the new challenges that I can expect, if confirmed for the position at Treasury.

As a bit of background, I am a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and served as an Air Force pilot for approximately seven years. I was fortunate to be offered the chance to return to the military as a member of the Air Force Secretariat in 1985. After four years in the Pentagon, I began a number of years as a Congressional investigator, culminating in serving as the Chief Investigator for both the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations and the Senate Finance Committee. Both of those positions were under the chairmanship of a very fine man, the late Senator William Roth. He set a very high standard for the integrity of the investigations that we conducted, and that is a standard that I strive to maintain today.

In the spring of 2006, I was confirmed as the IG of the SBA. This was during the aftermath of the hurricanes Katrina and Rita, with substantial challenges to the Agency in its recovery assistance role. Within 90 days of my appointment, we had established an IG office in New Orleans, with a staff of both auditors and investigators that would serve as the headquarters for a region extending from Florida to the Texas border. These are specialists that can assess the disaster work of the Agency and provide assistance to the Agency in getting help to victims in a more efficient and timely way. Our criminal investigators have been highly effective in bringing to justice those individuals who have attempted to illegally receive vital funds that were meant for victims. We are a very active member of the Katrina Fraud Task Force led by the Department of Justice.

The role of an Inspector General is challenging, if for no other reason than the dual reporting requirement to both the Department the IG oversees, and to the Congress. I believe that my time at SBA has proven that one can fairly and respectfully interact with the Agency leadership and yet still remain independent in its findings. In reporting to the Congress, through the appropriate oversight committees, I believe that it is imperative to be absolutely non-partisan in responding to Congressional requests and inquiries. It has been a pleasure to work with the staffs of both sides of the Senate and House Committees on Small Business, partly because I believe they recognized we made a true effort to be fair and impartial in every interaction. I made a promise to Senator Kerry in my last confirmation hearing,

and I will make the same to this committee. There will never be any politics involved in the work that we do.

Like my appointment to SBA after the hurricanes, this appointment comes at a critical time for the Department of the Treasury and our economy. The very words spoken by the Secretary can effect financial markets world wide, and ultimately affect each American's financial wellbeing. I will make every effort, if confirmed, to ensure that the Office of Inspector General is a positive aspect of that work, seeking to improve the efficiency and operations of the many various offices within the Department. I don't expect the leadership to always like what we may write, but it is my hope that they will recognize the fairness, impartiality and positive motivation with which the Office of the Inspector General will do its work.

Thank you again for considering me for confirmation to this important position, and I will be happy to answer any questions that you might have.