



Council of the
INSPECTORS GENERAL
on INTEGRITY and EFFICIENCY

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Congress Passes the Inspector General Empowerment Act of 2016

Early Saturday morning, the U.S. Senate joined the U.S. House of Representatives in passing, by unanimous consent, the Inspector General Empowerment Act of 2016, a law that will serve to protect the independence and effectiveness of Inspectors General for years to come.

Among its provisions, the Act confirms that federal IGs are entitled to full and prompt access to agency records, thereby eliminating any doubt about whether agencies and whistleblowers are legally authorized to disclose potentially sensitive information to IGs. In so doing, the Act ensures that IGs have the ability to conduct audits, reviews, and investigations in an independent and efficient manner. This provision was necessary because of refusals by several agencies since 2010 to provide their IGs with independent access to information that was available to the agency and relevant to ongoing oversight work by the agency Inspector General, and because of a Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel opinion in July 2015 asserting that the Inspector General Act did not entitle IGs to all records available to an agency.

Other important provisions allow IGs to match data across agencies to help uncover wasteful spending and enhance the public's access to information about misconduct among senior government employees.

The Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) has long advocated for these measures and welcomed the passage of the Act.

Department of Justice IG Michael E. Horowitz, who also serves as Chair of CIGIE, stated:

"Passage of the IG Empowerment Act enhances the IGs' ability to fight waste, fraud, abuse, and misconduct, protects whistleblowers who share information with IGs, increases government transparency, and bolsters the public's confidence in the independence of IGs. For these reasons, the Act is an important milestone for good government. The Inspector General community is grateful to the sponsors and co-sponsors of this Act and all those who stood up for independent oversight."