

**Statement of**

**The Institute of Internal Auditors**

**House Oversight and Government Reform Committee**

**“Obstructing Oversight: Concerns from Inspectors General”**

Chairman Issa, Ranking Member Cummings and members of the Committee:

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) is pleased to submit this statement for the record in connection with this important hearing on obstruction of Inspectors General.

The IIA is the internal audit profession’s global voice, acknowledged leader, chief advocate, and principal educator. As the profession’s recognized authority, The IIA actively supports the statutory independence of the nation’s Inspectors General as granted by the Inspector General Act of 1978. We appreciate the opportunity to provide Congress with our perspective on the alarming resistance by certain government agencies to granting access to records necessary for the IGs to carry out their mandates.

At a time when Americans are demanding greater accountability from leaders in the public and private sectors, we are profoundly concerned that the one office charged with holding our elected and appointed federal officials accountable is being handcuffed in its ability to do its job.

Clashes with the Department of Justice, Peace Corps, and Environmental Protection Agency outlined in the August 5 letter from 47 Inspectors General are rooted in claims that issues of privilege or other legal protections somehow trump the expressed authorization in the Inspector General Act. The IIA finds this particularly troubling.

Access to information is a cornerstone of effective internal auditing and one of the principle guarantors of independence. Withholding access to information is anathema to the public accountability envisioned by the framers of the IG Act. Since its passage 36 years ago, the nation’s Inspectors General have proved their value time and again uncovering waste, abuse, and wrongdoing – while saving taxpayers untold millions of dollars.

Any effort to circumvent or block an IG's investigative process should be challenged by all who seek accountability from our government. I was fortunate during my tenure as Inspector General of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Deputy Inspector General of the U.S. Postal Service to have boards that understood the important role of IGs. They conveyed zero tolerance policy for any management interference with our work. However, in more than 25 years as an auditor in the U.S. government, I still encountered many instances in which officials tried to block access to records, provided misleading information, or delayed the release of audit reports containing bad news.

I am encouraged to see bipartisan support for the Inspectors General in their call for access, particularly from leaders of this committee and from the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. Allowing any agency to block access to information based on competing legal protections would not only severely limit IG investigations, it would create the proverbial slippery slope toward erosion of IGs' legislative and statutory authority.

The IIA stands ready to assist Congress in helping to educate officials and staff at all levels of government to understand the importance of maintaining IGs' unfettered access to information and the absolute need for independence.

Established in 1941, The IIA is the recognized world leader in certification, education, research, standards and guidance for the internal audit profession. It is dedicated to supporting quality, professional, and ethical practices across all industries, as well as public enterprises. The IIA includes thousands of IG and other public-sector employees among its more than 60,000 members in the United States and more than 180,000 members worldwide.

As the profession's global standard-setting body, The IIA stands firmly behind the IGs' efforts for complete and unrestricted access to information they deem necessary to fulfilling their tasks. Anything less than full support of the IGs by Congress and the President would set a perilous precedent, undermining decades of effective oversight and the public's ability to hold our government officials accountable.

*Submitted by: Richard F. Chambers, CIA, QIAL, CGAP, CCSA, CRMA  
President and Chief Executive Officer*