Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 17, 2011

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to request that you address the growing number of vacancies that now exist among our nation's Inspectors General.

As you know, in 1978, Congress established the Inspectors General as powerful and independent offices with the responsibility to promote the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of federal departments and agencies. The investigations and reports of Inspectors General help Congress shape legislation and oversight activities. The Inspectors General also play an important role in improving government performance, providing transparency into federal programs, and giving Americans better value for their tax dollars.

In 2007, the latest year for which complete data is available, the Inspectors General closed 33,740 investigations into matters including benefit recipients, contractors, grantees, and federal employees. In the past two years, just one office, the Inspector General of the General Services Administration, audited or reviewed over 200 contracts with an estimated value of $25 billion, identified over $1.1 billion in potential cost avoidance and $33 million in questioned costs, and assisted in 23 False Claims Act cases that were settled for over $400 million.

According to the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), there are currently nine vacant presidentially appointed Inspector General positions across the government. This includes eight vacancies that have occurred since the beginning of your term. Cabinet-level agencies currently without a permanent Inspector General include the Department of State, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

We are particularly concerned that many of these vacancies involve departments and agencies responsible for oversight of several of your Administration's most important initiatives. For example, the positions of Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program, and Inspector General for the Intelligence Community are all currently vacant. The Department of State, which is responsible for billions of dollars of spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, has not had a permanent Inspector General since December 2007.

We share your commitment to making our government better able to serve its citizens and perform its core missions. As a result, we have serious concerns that the lack of permanent Inspectors General at so many federal agencies is impeding the federal government's efforts to increase efficiencies and detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

With this concern in mind, we respectfully request that you move without delay to appoint qualified, experienced individuals to serve as Inspectors General. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman
U.S. Senator

Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator

Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator

Rob Portman
U.S. Senator

Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress

Darrell E. Issa
Member of Congress

John Tierney
Member of Congress

Jason Chaffetz
Member of Congress