

THE CASE FOR MORE INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE INSPECTORS GENERAL

DAVID R. EICHENTHAL*, LUCY LANG**, & DANIEL L. FELDMAN***

Recent attacks on the independence of inspectors general (IGs)—including the mass dismissal of seventeen federal IGs at the beginning of President Donald Trump’s second Administration—underscore a growing threat to one of government’s most important systems of accountability. Nearly fifty years after the Inspector General Act of 1978, this Article argues for both stronger structural protections of IG independence and a reimagined role for inspectors general to ensure their continued effectiveness.

The Article traces the evolution of IGs as independent watchdogs across federal, state, and local governments and examines emerging risks to their independence, including politicized removals, declining institutional support, and eroding public trust. It contends that, while IG functions have remained largely static, the broader governance and information landscape has fundamentally changed.

In response, the Article proposes strengthening IG independence through reforms that could include fixed terms, for-cause removal protections, and budgetary safeguards and re-defining effectiveness by shifting focus from outputs to outcomes. It argues that IGs should prioritize work that improves government performance, protects vulnerable populations, and promotes democratic integrity, while engaging the public more directly through transparency and outreach.

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* Visiting Research Scholar, City University of New York Graduate Center, Center for Urban Research.

** Inspector General, State of New York.

*** Professor, Public Management, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. The authors thank Jack Wild of the Office of the Inspector General, State of New York, Rachel Pak, J.D. Candidate 2027, Columbia Law School, and Robert Vroman, J.D. Candidate 2027, Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University, for their research and editorial assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

President Donald Trump’s firing of eighteen federal inspectors general (IGs) in the first weeks of his second term without cause or notice has created an existential threat for federal watchdogs whose agencies are a model for more than 170 similar offices across state and local governments.¹ IGs have been successful at combatting fraud, waste, abuse and corruption at all levels of government.² But their success depends on their ability to act as independent truth tellers.

In the face of this threat, and nearly fifty years after the passage of the Inspector General Act of 1978, we must assess how to strengthen IGs’ independence and reinvent and reimagine their roles to make them even more effective.

This article outlines the evolution of IGs as watchdogs, details the threat to their independence and effectiveness, and proposes a series of policy and administrative options designed to safeguard IG independence and increase IG effectiveness. These recommendations are designed to spur discussion on the future of IGs at the federal, state, and local levels.

1. See Scott Pelley, Aliza Chasan, Maria Gavrilovic, & Alex Ortiz, *Watchdogs Fired by Trump Raise Alarms Over Future of Independent Government Oversight*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 9, 2025, 7:00 PM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-firings-watchdogs-inspectors-general-60-minutes/> [<https://perma.cc/VA9L-QA2V>]; E-mail from Michael Castrilli, Exec. Director, Ass’n of Inspectors Gen., to Jack Wild, Off. of the N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (Apr. 27, 2026) (on file with authors).

2. See *Annual Report to the President and Congress Fiscal Year 2024*, COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIE%20Annual%20Report%20to%20the%20President%20FY2024_FINAL.pdf [<https://perma.cc/M4YY-BXGA>] (last visited Aug. 6, 2025).

I. THE EVOLUTION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL AS WATCHDOGS: 1978 – PRESENT

In 1978, Congress passed the Inspector General Act (IG Act), ushering in a new era of government oversight in the United States.³ Federal IGs were designed to:

- “conduct independent, objective audits, investigations, and inspections;”
- “prevent and detect waste, fraud, and abuse;”
- “promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency;” and
- “keep agency heads and Congress fully . . . informed” about an agency’s problems and progress in addressing them.⁴

IGs have existed in various forms across federal, state, and local government agencies dating back to the Revolutionary War, but the IG Act created the framework for the federal IG system that we know today—with more than seventy department and agency IGs and more than 14,000 employees working to combat fraud, waste, and abuse across the federal government.⁵

The IG Act, one of a series of reform initiatives in response to Watergate, also presaged replication at the state and local level.⁶ While agencies like New York City’s Department of Investigation date back to the 1890s, most state and local IG offices have been created since 1978.⁷

In the last fifty years, Congress has continued to add new IGs for agencies and for special initiatives, such as the Troubled Asset Relief Program.⁸ State

3. Inspector General Act of 1978, Pub. L. No. 95-452, 92 Stat. 1101 (codified at 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424 (2024)).

4. DANIEL L. FELDMAN & DAVID EICHENTHAL, *THE ART OF THE WATCHDOG: FIGHTING FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE AND CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT* 104 (2014).

5. *See About OIG*, D.C. OFF. OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., <https://oig.dc.gov/about-oig/general/history> [<https://perma.cc/E96Y-3C3B>] (last visited Aug. 6, 2025) (noting additionally that IGs as an office originated in the armies of Louis XIV of France); COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, *supra* note 2.

6. Walter M. Schaub, Jr., *OGE and the Inspector General Community*, U.S. OFF. OF GOV’T ETHICS (July 17, 2015), <https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/Resources/OGE+and+the+Inspector+General+Community> [<https://perma.cc/37KR-5PAN>].

7. *See About OIG*, *supra* note 5 (reporting that “Massachusetts was the first state to establish an Office of Inspector General in 1981,” which led other states to follow suit); *Timeline*, N.Y.C. DEPT. OF INVESTIGATION, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doi/about/timeline.page> [<https://perma.cc/8BQX-EKFN>] (last visited Mar. 16, 2026) (stating that NYC’s Department of Investigation is “one of the oldest law enforcement agencies in the country,” as its predecessor was created in 1873); E-mail from Michael Castrilli, *supra* note 1.

8. *See, e.g.*, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424 (2024); *see also* 12 U.S.C. § 5231 (2024) (creating the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Assets Relief Program special initiative).

and local governments have also continued to embrace the utility of IGs, with new offices created as recently as 2024.⁹

Independence is fundamental to the work of IGs.¹⁰ To the extent that IGs are independent of the agencies and departments they oversee, they can be credible truth tellers and advocates for reform when needed—true watchdogs rather than lapdogs to the organizations or leaders they oversee. Successful IGs assert their independence while still pushing for and effectuating needed change from within the government structure.

IGs' independence has been greatly dependent on their statutory structure and powers.¹¹ The mechanisms governing an IG's appointment, removal, budget, and reporting requirements all go toward ensuring independence—or a lack thereof.¹² Independence, however, has also depended on less formal support structures. At the federal level, there has been historic bipartisan congressional support for IGs that goes back to the 1978 IG Act.¹³ That support has stemmed from a sense that IGs report as much to Congress as they do to the Executive Branch.¹⁴

When their work is known, IGs have also been popular with both the public and the press. IG audits and investigations make headlines and IGs have

9. See, e.g., *Establishing San Francisco's Inspector General*, CITY & CNTY. OF S.F., <https://www.sf.gov/establishing-san-franciscos-inspector-general> [<https://perma.cc/UYS3-TD4E>] (last visited Mar. 16, 2026) (noting that San Francisco voters approved Proposition C to create the Inspector General position for the City).

10. See COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, QUALITY STANDARDS FOR FEDERAL OFFICES OF INSPECTOR GENERAL 7 (2012), <https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/Silver%20Book%20Revision%20-%208-20-12r.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/9Z5M-6LCQ>]; ASS'N OF INSPECTORS GEN., PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR OFFICES OF INSPECTOR GENERAL 4–5 (2024), https://inspectorgeneralassociation-my.sharepoint.com/personal/mjcastrilli_inspectorsgeneral_org/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx [<https://perma.cc/GU4G-JLGR>].

11. QUALITY STANDARDS, *supra* note 10, at 11–12; PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS, *supra* note 10, at 4–5.

12. See BEN WILHELM, CONG. RSCH. SERV., R45450, STATUTORY INSPECTORS GENERAL IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: A PRIMER 18–19, 24–26 (2023) (explaining the typical ways IGs are appointed, removed, how the budget is allocated, and reporting requirements); Andrew Brunsdon, *Inspectors General and the Law of Oversight Independence*, 30 WM. & MARY BILL RTS. J. 1, 27–30, 38–39 (2021) (illustrating when appointment and removal power has led to decreased independence of IGs).

13. Fernando R. Laguarda, *Challenges to the Independence of Inspectors General in Robust Congressional Oversight*, 19 GEO. J.L. & PUB. POL'Y 211, 214 (2021).

14. *Id.*

generally won editorial support and the support of good government organizations.¹⁵

Over the last fifty years, there has been little in the way of change in what IGs do.¹⁶ They investigate, audit, and review government performance; make findings; refer cases for prosecution and recovery; and make recommendations. This is true at the federal level and largely true for state and local government IGs as well. Within the parameters of their statutory authority, IGs generally have broad discretion in what they choose to investigate and audit.¹⁷

IG performance has mostly been measured by arrests, indictments, savings, and money recovered.¹⁸ As a result, IGs have focused on what does not work in government far more than what does.

15. See, e.g., Jesse McKinley, *The Prison Escape That Riveted the Nation: 5 Things We Learned from an Inquiry Into How It Happened*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 31, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/31/nyregion/dannemora-prison-escape-that-riveted-the-nation-5-things-we-learned-from-an-inquiry-into-how-it-happened.html> [<https://perma.cc/E6LU-WSHT>]; Craig Wall, *Inspector General Report Details Hidden City Hall ‘Gift Room,’ Accuses Mayor of Improper Reporting*, ABC7 CHI. (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://abc7chicago.com/post/chicago-inspector-generals-report-details-hidden-gift-room-city-hall-accuses-mayor-brandon-johnson-improper-reporting/15847189/> [<https://perma.cc/SN9T-DHK6>]; Dannah Sauer, *NOPD Asks Inspector General to Review Officer Timesheets Amid Fox 8 Investigation*, FOX 8 WVUE (July 31, 2025, 7:52 PM), <https://www.fox8live.com/2025/07/31/nopd-asks-inspector-general-review-officer-timesheets-amid-fox-8-investigation/> [<https://perma.cc/5DM8-WABM>].

16. See, e.g., Pub. L. 117–286, § 3(b), Dec. 27, 2022 (laying out the responsibilities of IGs in the IG Act of 1978); *About the Office of Inspector General*, U.S. SEC. & EXCH. COMM’N (Sept. 16, 2025), <https://www.sec.gov/office-inspector-general/about-office-inspector-general> [<https://perma.cc/J4N5-MQM4>] (describing the role of the SEC’s inspector general and what the office does in the context of that commission).

17. QUALITY STANDARDS, *supra* note 10, at 4–5 (explaining that “OIGs may conduct, supervise, and coordinate inspections, evaluations, and other reviews related to the programs and operations of their departments and agencies”); PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS, *supra* note 10, at 2–3.

18. See, e.g., *Annual Report*, *supra* note 2, at 1 (highlighting that “[i]n fiscal year (FY) 2024, over 14,000 employees at 73 OIGs conducted audits, inspections, evaluations, and investigations. Together, their work resulted in significant improvements to the economy and efficiency of programs Governmentwide, with monetary accomplishments totaling approximately \$71.1 billion”); *Welcome to Oversight.gov*, COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, <https://www.oversight.gov/> [<https://perma.cc/P98Q-PA8F>] (last visited Aug. 6, 2025); N.Y. STATE WORKERS’ COMP. FRAUD INSPECTOR GEN., 2024 ANNUAL REPORT 3, https://issuu.com/newyorkstateig/docs/workers_compensation_fraud_inspector_general_2024 [<https://perma.cc/9TLS-2FXH>] (2024).

II. THE THREAT TO THE INDEPENDENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INSPECTORS GENERAL

The problem is that while IGs have changed little in the last fifty years, everything else around them has. Confidence in government has eroded—especially in the federal government.¹⁹ Most Americans believe that the federal government is inefficient.²⁰ As important, most Americans do not believe that the federal government works for them.

The role of the mainstream media has also fundamentally changed. When the IG Act was passed, there were three major television networks that most Americans relied on for their broadcast news.²¹ There were national print outlets, both newspapers and news magazines, that reported the news.²² Local newspapers—big and small—frequently had investigative reporters, and their editorials helped to shape public opinion.²³

Now, most Americans consume their news from highly individualized sources—some journalistic and some not.²⁴ News magazines have limited

19. *Public Trust in Government: 1958-2024*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (June 24, 2024), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/06/24/public-trust-in-government-1958-2024/> [<https://perma.cc/4BWQ-YUPL>] (“While trust in government has been low for decades, the current measure is one of the lowest in the nearly seven decades since the question was first asked by the National Election Study, and it is lower than it was last year (22%).”).

20. AMERICANS’ VIEWS OF GOVERNMENT’S ROLE: PERSISTENT DIVISIONS AND AREAS OF AGREEMENT, PEW RSCH. CTR. (June 24, 2024), https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/06/PP_2024.6.24_role-of-government_REPORT.pdf [<https://perma.cc/KK8R-ALAH>] (“There is a persistent belief that government is wasteful: 56% say it is ‘almost always wasteful and inefficient.’”).

21. Jennifer González, *Syndication Regulation and TV’s Big Three: Broadcasting Regulations and 1970s Television*, LIBR. OF CONG. BLOGS: IN CUSTODIA LEGIS L. LIBRS. OF CONG. (Jan. 31, 2023), <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2023/01/syndication-regulation-and-tvs-big-three-broadcasting-regulations-and-1970s-television/> [<https://perma.cc/PCN6-7NVZ>] (describing efforts to weaken control of “The Big Three”—NBC, ABC, and CBS—that lasted into the 1980’s).

22. See Michael Schudson, *The Fall, Rise, and Fall of Media Trust*, COLUM. JOURNALISM REV. (Mar. 6, 2019), https://www.cjr.org/special_report/the-fall-rise-and-fall-of-media-trust.php [<https://perma.cc/L53W-K7J2>]; FORTUNE Editors, *The New Concerns About the Press*, FORTUNE, Apr. 1975, <https://fortune.com/article/the-new-concerns-about-the-press/> [<https://perma.cc/GN7J-W4Q4>].

23. Compare *The New Concerns About the Press*, *supra* note 22, with *Report Shows Local News Deserts Expanding*, NW. UNIV. MEDILL SCH. OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA, INTEGRATED MKTG. COMM’NS (Oct. 23, 2024), <https://www.medill.northwestern.edu/news/2024/medill-report-shows-local-news-deserts-expanding.html> [<https://perma.cc/32US-R233>] (documenting the consistent and dramatic decline of local newspapers since 2005).

24. Dr. Joy Jenkins & Dr. Lucas Graves, *United States*, REUTERS INST. (June 17, 2024) <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/united-states> [<https://>

readership and influence, while newspapers are in retreat.²⁵

Congressional bipartisanship, after years of partisan redistricting, special interest campaign contributions, and political polarization, has collapsed.²⁶

And there is now an existential threat to the independence and effectiveness of federal inspectors general. In their Presidential Transition Handbook, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) explains that “[h]istorically, because of their nonpartisan, independent status, IGs have remained in office when Presidential Administrations change.”²⁷ But President Trump, who had fired IGs during his first term,²⁸ took the unprecedented step of firing seventeen IGs *en masse* on the Friday night at the end of the first week of his second term in office.²⁹ Shortly thereafter, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) IG appropriately exercised his jurisdiction by publicly reporting on the negative effects of the freezing of funding and mass firing of workers at that agency, the President retaliated by firing him as well.³⁰

perma.cc/Y4VK-LCFU] (finding that in 2024, 72% of Americans used online news sources, including 48% who relied on social media for news); Laura Gartry, *Personalised News: How To Balance Technology With Editorial Integrity*, REUTERS INST. (July 19, 2024), <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/personalised-news-how-balance-technology-and-editorial-integrity> [<https://perma.cc/7KXY-7D43>] (discussing ongoing global efforts to ethically personalize journalistic news sources); *For the First Time, Social Media Overtakes TV as America’s Top News Source*, NIEMAN LAB (June 16, 2025, 7:02 PM), <https://www.niemanlab.org/2025/06/for-the-first-time-social-media-overtakes-tv-as-americans-top-news-source/> [<https://perma.cc/GP5J-JWUS>].

25. NIEMAN LAB, *supra* note 24.

26. See *What Causes Congressional Polarization: Changing Politics, or Changing Politicians?*, UNIV. OF CHI. HARRIS SCH. OF PUB. POL’Y (Jan. 13, 2025), <https://harris.uchicago.edu/news-events/news/what-causes-congressional-polarization-changing-politics-or-changing-politicians> [<https://perma.cc/TDX9-GJE4>].

27. *Presidential Transition Handbook: The Role of Inspectors General and the Transition to a New Administration*, COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY (Nov. 2024), <https://www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/CIGIE%20Presidential%20Transition%20Handbook%20-%202024.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/RR55-HMEY>].

28. Melissa Quinn, *The Internal Watchdogs Trump Has Fired or Replaced*, CBS NEWS (May 19, 2020, 11:43 AM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-inspectors-general-internal-watchdogs-fired-list/#> [<https://perma.cc/4SN6-KNK4>].

29. See Manu Raju, Alayna Treene, Morgan Rimmer, & Annie Grayer, *Trump Fires Inspectors General from More Than a Dozen Federal Agencies*, CNN (Jan. 25, 2025, 10:59 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/25/politics/trump-fires-inspectors-general> [<https://perma.cc/E9DW-SDK9>].

30. See Jennifer Hansler, *USAID IG Fired Day After Report Critical of Impacts of Trump Administration’s Dismantling of The Agency*, CNN (Feb. 11, 2025, 8:36 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/11/politics/usaaid-inspector-general-fired-trump> [<https://perma.cc/AQJ9-GJ8B>].

While many of the fired IGs are now challenging their termination because the President failed to provide the required thirty-day notice and explanation of cause to Congress, litigation is likely to take years to resolve after the court rejected an injunction.³¹ Even in the absence of the same sort of direct attacks on their independence, the reality is that state and local IGs—many of whose offices were created in the federal image—face risk as well.³²

III. THE NEED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE OVERSIGHT

More than a decade ago, Feldman and Eichenthal wrote of “both a governance imperative and an economic imperative for more effective oversight.”³³ They wrote that “without effective oversight, it should be no surprise that Americans have so little confidence in government’s ability to take on society’s toughest challenges.”³⁴ They noted that while the case for more oversight was strong, “[m]ore effective oversight requires much more.”³⁵

First and foremost, for appointed oversight officials like IGs, “independence is essential to assure that watchdogs are willing to exercise their audit

31. See *Storch v. Hegseth*, 804 F. Supp. 3d 216, 229 (D.D.C. 2025) (“The Court will not decide the merits of Plaintiffs’ claims and whether they are entitled to legal remedies, such as back pay, at this time. Due to the Supreme Court’s recent grant of certiorari in *Trump v. Slaughter* . . . , which may bear on the issues presented here.”); Transcript of Oral Argument, *Trump v. Slaughter*, No. 25-332 (U.S. Dec. 8, 2025); Amy Howe, *Trump v. Slaughter: An Explainer*, SCOTUSBLOG (Dec. 3, 2025), <https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/12/trump-v-slaughter-an-explainer/> [<https://perma.cc/3QAR-JJD6>] (“The [C]ourt’s eventual ruling could determine whether Congress can limit not only the president’s ability to fire members of the FTC but also his ability to terminate other heads of multimember independent agencies.”); Chris Cameron, *Judge Refuses to Immediately Reinstate Inspectors General Fired by Trump*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/14/us/politics/trump-inspectors-general-ruling.html> [<https://perma.cc/GE2P-PL7E>].

32. See MARK LEE GREENBLATT, *The Federal Inspectors General*, in ETHICAL STANDARDS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR 195, 209–10 n.4 (Jennifer G. Rodgers & Evan A. Davis eds., 3d ed. 2022) (“Many states and some municipal governments also have Inspectors General that perform . . . oversight functions.”). Compare 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424 (2024), with ASS’N OF INSPECTORS GEN., *Model Legislation for the Establishment of Offices of Inspector General*, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IVcQM6j_8YPRBcPqefrEHkzKKE1iwZo1/view [<https://perma.cc/C8XD-VFV9>] (last visited Mar. 12, 2026).

33. FELDMAN & EICHENTHAL, *supra* note 4, at 251.

34. *Id.* at 252 (stating that “[w]ithout effective oversight, we cannot have effective governance” at all, tying this general premise into the authors’ idea that “the greatest enemies of the watchdog are those who believe that corruption, or fraud or waste or abuse, exists but there is nothing that can be done to limit it.”).

35. *Id.* at 256 (“There needs to be a political environment that recognizes oversight as an essential function of democratic government, not as a form of political attack.”).

and investigative resources without fear of retribution or retaliation.”³⁶ We need to better protect federal IG independence to prevent future attacks and ensure that state and local IGs are protected from similar ones. Possible safeguards include:

- IGs and their first deputies should have fixed terms that do not overlap with the appointing authority;
- IGs should be subject to removal only for cause and only upon notice to the legislative branch when they are appointees of an executive;
- IGs should regularly report to entities independent of the agency, department, or government that they are providing oversight to. For example, department IGs should report to the enterprise-wide executive and the legislative branch;
- IGs and their first deputies should be subject to confirmation by a legislative branch (e.g. Congress, state legislature, city council);
- In the case of a removal of an IG or another vacancy, the confirmed deputy would then assume the role of the IG absent an appointment in a timely manner;
- IGs and their deputies should be legally protected against removal as a means of retaliation for their legal actions;
- IG budgets should be subject to a “maintenance of effort” provision whereby punitive budget cuts would not be permitted.

Second, we need to reimagine and reinvent the role of IGs so that they are better able to make government honest, efficient, and effective. In 2018, the Project on Government Oversight (POGO)—perhaps the leading advocate for independent oversight at the federal level—issued a thoughtful and detailed report examining the state of the IG Act after 40 years.³⁷ POGO proposed a series of recommendations on the need for strong and consistent leadership in IG offices, improved reporting on agency implementation of IG recommendations, better procedures for working with whistleblowers and improved access to data.³⁸ These are all worth consideration.

But there need to be more fundamental changes in IG office operations—most of which would not require legislative action but could be implemented by IGs themselves. Two of POGO’s recommendations importantly point to broader reforms in what IGs focus on and how they engage with the public: “Inspectors General Should Prioritize Work on Important Issues Affecting the Nation” and “The Public and Congress Need Improved and Consistent

36. *Id.* at 257.

37. PROJECT ON GOV’T OVERSIGHT, THE WATCHDOGS AFTER FORTY YEARS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUR NATION’S FEDERAL INSPECTORS GENERAL (July 9, 2018).

38. *Id.*

Access to Inspector General Work.”³⁹ Similarly, Feldman and Eichenthal wrote that “watchdogs need to understand the political and policy context that they are operating in. Tireless investigation and thorough audits will have little impact if their findings and results are not framed in a way that plays into current public debate and discussion.”⁴⁰

A. Inspectors General Should Focus on Making Government Work for Those Who Need It Most

Pervasive economic inequality has eroded confidence in the democratic system and in government.⁴¹ IGs need to take on instances where government appears to be rigged against the interests of low income and working-class Americans. To the extent that IGs focus on the need for government to improve, that focus should turn to where government is failing to help marginalized or vulnerable populations. IGs should apply this “moral test” to their decisionmaking regarding prioritizing investigations and audits. IGs need to stand up for those who often cannot stand up for themselves.

There are good examples of this focus in the work of IGs. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services IG has used its powers for the benefit of vulnerable members of the public. Black babies in Wisconsin were three times more likely than white babies to die and Black women five times more likely than white women to die during pregnancy and in childbirth.⁴² In 2022, Wisconsin awarded \$16 million worth of grants related to maternal health, including investing heavily in its Medicaid Child Care Coordination benefit, designed to provide case coordination and nutrition services to mothers at high risk for bad health outcomes.⁴³

39. *Id.* at 18, 24.

40. FELDMAN & EICHENTHAL, *supra* note 4, at 257.

41. See Eli G. Rau & Susan Stokes, *Income Inequality and the Erosion of Democracy in the Twenty-First Century*, in 122 PROC. NAT’L ACAD. SCI. U.S. AM. (2025) (“[P]ublic perceptions of unfairness in economic distributions and opportunities contribute to cynicism about the broader system, weakening people’s commitment to political norms and institutions.”).

42. See *Infant Mortality Dashboard*, WIS. DEP’T OF HEALTH SERVS., <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/stats/births/infant-mortality.htm> [<https://perma.cc/EQ9F-2GVM>] (last visited Mar. 16, 2026) (reporting that from 2020 to 2022, infant mortality averaged 12.9 deaths per 1,000 live births among Black Wisconsinites, compared with only 4.3 deaths per 1,000 live births among white Wisconsinites); Devi Shastri, *\$16 Million in Grants Will Support Maternal and Infant Health Initiatives Across Wisconsin*, MILWAUKEE J. SENTINEL (Oct. 12, 2022, 5:50 PM), <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/health/2022/10/12/gov-tony-evers-wisconsin-department-health-services-grant-16-million-maternal-and-infant-health/10478566002/> [<https://perma.cc/39XJ-E8Y5>].

43. See Shastri, *supra* note 42; Mary Spicuzza & Cary Spivak, *Wisconsin Officials Crack Down*

Despite that tremendous influx of funds, the numbers of Black babies dying in Wisconsin has remained high.⁴⁴ Over the past two years, working with law enforcement partners, the IG uncovered extensive fraud across the system, including many providers that had engaged in identity theft in order to bill Medicaid for services never actually rendered.⁴⁵ Through the IG's audits and enforcement actions—including eight criminal referrals to the Wisconsin Department of Justice—numerous fraudulent providers were removed from the program and individuals in need were redirected to providers equipped to provide these much-needed services.⁴⁶

B. *Inspectors General Should Support Effective Government*

IGs should never hold back on investigations or audits finding fraud, waste, and abuse. But they should also be equally clear and supportive when government is working effectively and efficiently and, perhaps more importantly, when failures are due to policy decisions rather than malfeasance or misadministration.

CIGIE annually reports to the President and to Congress on the overall work of the federal IG community. In its report for fiscal year 2023, CIGIE provided a summary of the IG community's accomplishments, featuring questioned costs, prosecutions, civil actions, contractor debarments, and personnel actions.⁴⁷ All of CIGIE's seven annual awards focus on similar efforts.

on *Fraud-Ridden Infant Mortality Program*, MILWAUKEE J. SENTINEL (Nov. 10, 2023, at 1:42 PM), <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/investigations/2023/11/10/wisconsin-cracks-down-on-fraud-ridden-infant-mortality-program/71530695007/> [<https://perma.cc/UWT5-NXDC>].

44. See *Infant Mortality Dashboard*, *supra* note 42 (finding that from 2022 to 2024, Black infant mortality rates averaged 12.7 deaths per 1,000 live births).

45. See also U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUM. SERVS., OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., A-06-23-01002, WISCONSIN MADE AT LEAST \$18.5 MILLION IN IMPROPER FEE-FOR-SERVICE MEDICAID PAYMENTS FOR APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS PROVIDED TO CHILDREN DIAGNOSED WITH AUTISM 8–10 (2025) (finding a variety of improper and potentially improper Medicaid payments to children diagnosed with autism). *But see* Helu Wang & Dee J. Hall, *Critics Call Wisconsin's Medicaid Fraud Crackdown 'Bullying'*, WIS. WATCH (Dec. 9, 2018), <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2018/12/critics-call-wisconsins-medicaid-fraud-crackdown-bullying/> [<https://perma.cc/JA9M-MES3>] (highlighting that some Medicaid providers engaged in fraud by submitting falsified records or billing for services, hours of care, or medical equipment that were never actually provided, resulting in criminal convictions, repayments, and other penalties).

46. See U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUM. SERVS., *supra* note 45. *But see* Wang & Hall, *supra* note 45.

47. *Annual Report to the President and Congress: Fiscal Year 2023*, COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, www.ignet.gov/sites/default/files/files/CIGIEAnnualReporttothePresidentFY2023_FINAL.pdf [<https://perma.cc/68L3-VY5H>] (last visited Mar. 16, 2026).

There are no reported accomplishments related to investigations or audits finding programs that *are* working. There are no awards that focus on identifying and promoting departmental or agency success.

To the extent the goal of oversight is reform, it makes some sense to focus on areas in need of improvement. But this comes at a cost to democratic governance and to government performance. That is because the elimination or defunding of a government program that works is just as wasteful as the continued funding of programs that do not—if not more so. “[IGs] must explain that the services people value, education, health care, defense, transportation, and a range of other benefits, are provided through taxpayer support and are jeopardized when agencies lack the funding to provide those services effectively.”⁴⁸

A good example is the work of the City of Chicago IG. In 2023, the IG conducted an audit of the Department of Family and Support Services’ (DFSS) outreach to encampments of people experiencing homelessness.⁴⁹ Like many cities, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chicago experienced a surge in homelessness and increase in encampments in public areas.⁵⁰ Exacerbating concerns, in the year prior to the audit, more than 8,000 asylum seekers had arrived in Chicago, including many who were bused to Chicago from Texas.⁵¹

48. DANIEL L. FELDMAN & FRANK ANECHARICO, *The Unmet Challenge: The IG System and Trust in American Government*, in A CRITICAL LOOK AT OFFICES OF INSPECTOR GENERAL 23 (Robin Kempf ed., forthcoming 2026).

49. CITY OF CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., AUDIT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES OUTREACH TO ENCAMPMENTS OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, 3 (2023), <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Audit-of-DFSS-Outreach-to-Encampments-of-People-Experiencing-Homelessness.pdf> [https://perma.cc/8VBE-48VP]; see also Erin Hegarty, *OIG Report Finds DFSS is Successful in Helping Chicagoans Living in Encampments Find Permanent Housing*, DAILY LINE (Aug. 24, 2023), <https://www.thedailyline.com/oig-report-city-successful-chicagoans-encampments-permanent-housing> [https://perma.cc/4JE5-XPFM] (summarizing the audit’s findings that the Accelerated Moving Events program “successfully provides rapid rehousing for unhoused Chicagoans living in encampments who want to pursue permanent housing”).

50. See CITY OF CHI., 2025 ANN. REP. ON HOMELESSNESS, https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/Homeless/2025-Homeless-PointInTimeReport/2025%20Annual%20Report%20on%20Homelessness.pdf [https://perma.cc/9VDK-L96F] (last visited Mar. 16, 2026) (describing the rise in housing prices and limited supply of housing in Chicago between 2020 and 2024).

51. Matt Stefanski, *Mayor-Elect Brandon Johnson Pledges Collaboration with Chicagoans, City Council to Address Influx of Migrants*, NBC CHI. (May 5, 2023), <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/mayor-elect-brandon-johnson-migrant-crisis/3135202/> [https://perma.cc/CBT2-XVCZ].

As the department charged with the City of Chicago's efforts to combat homelessness, DFSS undertook a "housing first" approach by implementing Accelerated Moving Events with the goal of helping unhoused Chicagoans secure and retain housing.⁵² DFSS also coordinated with Chicago's Department of Streets and Sanitation to schedule encampment cleanings.⁵³ These efforts were governed by the City's "Policy and Procedures Governing Off-Street Cleanings," an expansion on an earlier agreement that had settled a proposed class action lawsuit against the City related to encampment cleaning efforts.⁵⁴ Chicago faced criticism both that encampments were not being addressed and that they were being cleared improperly.⁵⁵

In the IG's work to determine the efficacy of the efforts as well as the relevant agencies' compliance with the law, the office reviewed outreach program documentation and encampment cleaning schedules.⁵⁶ IG staff also interviewed agency and program staff, unhoused Chicagoans, and residents.⁵⁷ Critically, the IG also conducted both announced and unannounced site visits to encampments to determine the agencies' compliance with public posting notice requirements.⁵⁸

Through this creative combination of traditional audit and investigative steps, as well as public outreach efforts, the City of Chicago IG determined that "DFSS does not permanently displace encampment residents from public spaces."⁵⁹ The IG also found that "[t]he City makes reasonable efforts to protect encampment residents' portable personal possessions," and that "DFSS carries out AMEs [Accelerated Moving Events] that largely ensure participating encampment residents secure and retain housing."⁶⁰ This work both illuminated the City's processes related to this area of public concern and served to set the record straight about misconceptions that the City was clearing encampments improperly.

By auditing and reporting on the City's compliance, the IG underscored the important work being done to balance public health and safety concerns

52. CITY OF CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., *supra* note 49, at 3.

53. *Id.* at 11–12.

54. *Id.* at 13–14.

55. See Mauricio Peña, Katrina Pham, and Nissa Rhee, *Migrants Describe Inhumane Conditions at Chicago's Largest Shelter*, BLOCK CLUB CHI. (Dec. 15, 2023), <https://blockclubchicago.org/2023/12/15/migrants-describe-inhumane-conditions-at-chicagos-largest-shelter/> [<https://perma.cc/773H-PM8G>] (describing the inhumane living conditions that migrants faced in a homeless shelter in Chicago in 2023).

56. CITY OF CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., *supra* note 49, at 15.

57. *Id.*

58. *Id.*

59. *Id.* at 3.

60. *Id.*

with the rights of often vulnerable encampment residents.⁶¹ Importantly, notwithstanding that the findings largely confirmed that the program was operating as intended, the IG made the report public. As the IG explained, “You can’t hold people accountable in secret.”⁶²

C. *Inspectors General Should Promote the Integrity of the Electoral Process*

Fierce attacks on the integrity of elections in the United States, although completely without merit, have nonetheless threatened American democracy.⁶³ IGs, where it is within their jurisdictions, can play an important role in investigating and reviewing the integrity of the election process with a focus on ensuring fair and free elections.⁶⁴ Because most voters who questioned the results of the 2020 election were satisfied with the outcome of the 2024 election, this is less of an issue today.⁶⁵ But a system where public confidence in elections depends on the outcome is not very sustainable.

The unique position of IGs and their access to government information well positions them to be truth tellers in rebutting the ‘alternative facts’ that often drive anti-democratic attacks. To the extent the public learns of their efforts, IGs can assuage fears that our elections have been compromised or ‘stolen.’ There are already good examples of IGs at all levels of government doing just that.

61. *Id.*

62. Telephone Interview by Lucy Lang with Deborah Witzburg, Inspector General, City of Chicago (June 20, 2024).

63. See Jasleen Singh, *The Trump Administration’s Campaign to Undermine the Next Election*, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUST. (Aug. 3, 2025), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-next-election> [https://perma.cc/5TWD-LHCS] (“The Trump [A]dministration has launched a concerted drive to undermine American elections. These moves are unprecedented and in some cases illegal.”); Ben Guarino, *Voting Has Never Been More Secure Than It Is Right Now*, SCI. AM. (Nov. 2, 2024), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/voting-has-never-been-more-secure-than-it-is-right-now/> [https://perma.cc/WZP4-UHPM] (“[M]odern voting procedures are only becoming more robust—and those casting ballots by mail or machine in this year’s presidential election can, in fact, be more confident than ever that their votes will be tallied accurately.”).

64. See, e.g., *Inspector General*, U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM’N (Feb. 24, 2026), <https://www.eac.gov/inspector-general> [https://perma.cc/G2PP-EMS4].

65. *Voters Broadly Positive About How Elections Were Conducted, in Sharp Contrast to 2020*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (Dec. 4, 2024), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/12/04/voters-broadly-positive-about-how-elections-were-conducted-in-sharp-contrast-to-2020> [https://perma.cc/M65J-J2CX] (“Today, 88% of voters say that elections across the United States were run and administered at least somewhat well, up from 59% of voters in 2020. This year’s rosier view of election administration is entirely driven by a shift in views among those who voted for Donald Trump for president. . . .”).

The U.S. Department of Justice IG, for example, exposed one of former Attorney General William Barr's efforts to encourage and support Donald Trump's claims that his political opponents conspired to 'dump' absentee ballots supporting him.⁶⁶ The U.S. Postal Service IG's extensive audit over a four-month test period concluded that the Postal Service's system for handling election-related and political mail reached on-time performance at least 97% of the time, although it did make ten recommendations for improvement.⁶⁷

D. Inspectors General Should Bring the Public into Public Integrity

IGs should approach engagement with the public very differently. Batohi and Stone note that "[i]f anti-corruption remains a game between corrupt elites on the one hand and professional bureaucrats, auditors, and lawyers on the other, the elites will win every time. Only when the institutional partnerships dislodging corruption capture the public imagination and rally the public to action do the forces of corruption collapse."⁶⁸

66. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEP'T OF JUST., NO. 24-082, A REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEPARTMENT'S RELEASE OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS CONCERNING A LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ELECTION FRAUD INVESTIGATION IN SEPTEMBER 2020 5 (2024), <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/24-082.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/2K3W-YUTA>].

67. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. POSTAL SERV., NO. 24-016-R24, ELECTION MAIL READINESS FOR THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION 1, 8-9, 12, 15 (2024), <https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2024-08/24-016-r24.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/9MZG-5Z6E>] (recommending management at different levels coordinate to implement oversight and additional monitoring controls; update the "Operational Clean Sweep Search Checklist"; provide training to all employees, keep evidence it was conducted, and post relevant procedures around the workroom floor; clarify the "pitch-catch-clear process" to include timeframes and the elections for which this process is required; implement a process for delivery units to separate election mail marked as undeliverable prior to sending it to a processing facility; adjust the postmarking policy to ensure mail-in ballots receive a postmark; clearly communicate the postmarking policy; implement a plan to process, transport, and deliver election mail to facilities impacted by the "Local Transportation Optimization initiative"; ensure processing and distribution centers have appropriate procedures and resources to prioritize processing election mail; and pausing "Delivering for America" operational changes from September to November 8, 2024).

68. Shamila Batohi & Christopher Stone, *The Chandler Papers: The World's Anti-Corruption Efforts Need a Reset*, OXFORD UNIV. BLAVATNIK SCH. OF GOV'T 21 (2023), <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/The%20Chandler%20Papers%20-%20The%20world's%20anti-corruption%20efforts%20need%20a%20reset.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/QAE3-EMMC>].

This level of engagement is essential for the success of the redefined role of IGs, even if it seems antithetical to how IGs have historically operated.⁶⁹ As Batohi and Stone argue, “when disrupting systemic corruption enabled by powerful interests, public support is essential [A]nti-corruption institutions should be looking for ways of engaging community groups, civil society organisations, and business groups in the very process of dismantling systems of corruption.”⁷⁰

IGs of all stripes are increasingly recognizing the need to expand outreach to the public they serve, both to increase the complaints that so often spur investigations and audits, and to elevate the public’s awareness of their good governance role, “[t]he challenge here is to go further: to engage communities in active partnership”⁷¹

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts IG, for example, has made it a stated objective to be physically in the community.⁷² Hearing from local officials about their concerns around the costs and risks associated with procurement fraud, the IG created a training program called “OIG Academy,” designed to connect with local officials and provide education about procurement best practices to prevent fraud and abuse.⁷³ The IG explains, “One of my other initiatives is to get out of this office, I try to meet at least once a week with stakeholders, whether those are state agency heads, other appointed officials, agency leaders, [or] municipal officials.”⁷⁴ This sort of intentional physical outreach has yielded strong dividends in establishing relationships with people at the front lines of detecting misuse of public monies.⁷⁵

The City of Chicago IG has made a concerted effort to have her staff meet with Chicagoans in person. That office regularly sends staff to community meetings of a variety of kinds across the city to present information about

69. See OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., *supra* note 66, at 5 (quoting a senior DOJ official as saying that “it would be very unusual to issue a public statement in the middle of an investigation”).

70. Batohi & Stone, *supra* note 68, at 22.

71. *Id.* at 21.

72. *The Inspector General Is In—And Out in the Commonwealth . . .*, W. MASS POLS. & INSIGHT (Aug. 15, 2024), <https://wmasspi.com/2024/08/the-inspector-general-is-in-and-out-in-the-commonwealth.html> [<https://perma.cc/E499-32VG>] (“That’s why we’re trying to meet people where they are, help them help themselves, but also hold them accountable, to do the right thing.”) (quoting IG Shapiro).

73. *OIG Academy*, OFF. OF MASS. INSPECTOR GEN., <https://www.mass.gov/oig-academy> [<https://perma.cc/V3PT-JY2S>] (last visited Mar. 12, 2026).

74. W. MASS POLS. & INSIGHT, *supra* note 72.

75. See OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., 2024 ANN. REP. 8–11 (2025), <https://www.mass.gov/doc/oig-2024-annual-report/download> [<https://perma.cc/L3Z3-FC3Y>].

their work and to listen to the concerns of community members.⁷⁶ The stated purpose is “to listen to community concerns, talk about our work, and even initiate intakes for complaints or suggestions to make City government better.”⁷⁷ The office tracks all such community outreach and publishes it on a public dashboard connected with their website.⁷⁸ Between March 2017 and October 2025, the Chicago OIG hosted or attended 848 such events, engaging with 909,002 attendees.⁷⁹

In 2023 the Chicago IG introduced Community Engagement Project Plans (CEPPs), a formal process to involve community stakeholders.⁸⁰ According to the IG, “[t]hese CEPPs are now a documented step in each audit and inquiry project, to formally include community input at every stage, from understanding how a particular issue impacts the day-to-day lives of Chicagoans to gathering first-hand stories of lived experiences.”⁸¹

76. See *City of Chicago Office of Inspector General OIG Community Engagement*, CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/data-dashboards/community-engagement/> [<https://perma.cc/X6QL-D2BU>] (last visited Mar. 10, 2026); see also Press Release, OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., *OIG Releases Draft Annual Plans, Seeks Feedback to Prioritize 2025 Projects* (Dec. 9, 2024), <https://igchicago.org/2024/12/09/oig-releases-draft-annual-plans-seeks-feedback-to-prioritize-2025-projects/> [<https://perma.cc/454C-ZP39>] (describing OIG’s ideas developed on the expansion of Listening Tours where “OIG staff talked with Chicagoans about what they have seen go wrong in City government and how they believe City government could serve them better”).

77. See *City of Chicago Office of Inspector General OIG Community Engagement*, CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/data-dashboards/community-engagement/> [<https://perma.cc/X6QL-D2BU>] (last visited Mar. 10, 2026) (communicating the importance of community engagement by government officials within the city of Chicago); see also Sasha-Ann Simons, *Chicago Watchdog Goes on ‘Listening Tour’ to Hear From Chicagoans*, WBEZ CHI. (Apr. 17, 2024, at 5:44 PM), <https://www.wbez.org/reset-with-sasha-ann-simons/2024/04/17/chicago-watchdog-goes-on-listening-tour-to-hear-from-chicagoans> [<https://perma.cc/2HXX-9NRQ>].

78. *City of Chicago Office of Inspector General Information Portal*, CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/> [<https://perma.cc/G6UL-LBEA>] (last visited Aug. 6, 2025).

79. See *City of Chicago Office of Inspector General OIG Community Engagement*, CHI. OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., <https://igchicago.org/information-portal/data-dashboards/community-engagement/> [<https://perma.cc/X6QL-D2BU>] (last visited Mar. 10, 2026) (analyzing all events that take place within the City of Chicago but noting that this does not encompass all events as some take place outside the city).

80. See, e.g., OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN., OFF. OF EQUITY & RACIAL JUST., CITY OF CHICAGO RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN 1–5 (2023) (articulating department strategy based on a “[c]ommunity Engagement Project Plan to increase transparency, information, and collaboration with community and City stakeholders”).

81. Deborah Witzburg, *Reflecting on Two Years: Strengthening OIG’s Community Engagement for*

IGs are also putting the ‘public’ into ‘public integrity’ through a variety of media channels. Offices that traditionally had very little outward facing media presence are increasingly hiring communications professionals to identify opportunities to educate the public about their work, and their potential.⁸² Historically, concerns about confidentiality, as well as legal and strategic concerns about cases often led to avoidance of media coverage and a culture of opacity at IG offices.⁸³ But the tide is turning. While all public facing efforts must prioritize the integrity of investigations and confidentiality concerns, increasingly IGs are seeing the potential for strategic media outreach to enhance their work.

According to Pew, “a little under half of U.S. adults (48%) say they often or sometimes” consume news on social media platforms and 94% of journalists “use social media for their jobs.”⁸⁴ The most successful uses of social media in the public sector are those which do not simply use social media as a platform to push out traditional media output, but rather those which recognize that social media is an added means for accomplishing the long-standing goals of external relations and public affairs. Indeed, these networks must be viewed not simply as media platforms, but as strategic tools for reaching and even creating community.

For example, the New York State IG’s Office has undertaken extensive efforts to connect, educate, and share on social media.⁸⁵ Their success in

Meaningful Oversight, LINKEDIN (Apr. 19, 2024), https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/reflecting-two-years-strengthening-oigs-community-engagement-ry8fc?trk=public_post [<https://perma.cc/2GFK-UL6K>].

82. See N.Y. State Inspector General (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/newyorkstateig/> [<https://perma.cc/RNY8-PLAH>] (last visited Apr. 2, 2026); see also *External Affairs*, OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN. <https://oig.dc.gov/about-oig/departments-and-staff/external-affairs-division> [<https://perma.cc/5WYE-XJNJ>] (last visited Apr. 2, 2026).

83. See, e.g., Lucy Lang, *TU: Commentary: Inspectors General Must Bring the Public Into Public Integrity*, OFF. OF INSPECTOR GEN. (Jan. 25, 2026), <https://ig.ny.gov/news/tu-commentary-inspectors-general-must-bring-public-public-integrity> [<https://perma.cc/P7MF-XGZ3>] (“For much of American history, inspectors general have operated like a black box, disclosing little to the public and releasing reports and remedial recommendations with little fanfare.”).

84. See Mark Jurkowitz & Jeffrey Gottfried, *Twitter Is the Go-To Social Media Site for U.S. Journalists, but Not for the Public*, PEW RSCH. CTR. (June 27, 2022), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/06/27/twitter-is-the-go-to-social-media-site-for-u-s-journalists-but-not-for-the-public/> [<https://perma.cc/94SK-QFMA>].

85. See N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/newyorkstateig> [<https://perma.cc/MFS3-XWA6>] (last visited Apr. 2, 2026); N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), THREADS, <https://www.threads.com/@newyorkstateig> [<https://perma.cc/KY3L-JCAC>] (last visited Apr. 2, 2026); N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@NewYorkStateIG), X, <https://x.com/newyorkstateig> [<https://perma.cc/P746-284E>] (last

building a digital presence from the ground up over the past three years has served as a tool to amplify the Office’s traditional earned media coverage—highlighting quotes from newspaper articles, disseminating clips from television and radio appearances, and pushing out opinion pieces to audiences far beyond the reach of the original news source.⁸⁶ The Office’s social media strategy also recognizes the importance of injecting a touch of personality into their posts, while at the same time fostering connections and sharing the Office’s work and the related stories in ways that resonates with the communities they serve.

This work facilitates formal and informal interaction with the agencies under that office’s jurisdiction and provides alternative means for people to raise concerns and file complaints⁸⁷—especially populations who are ill-resourced, young, or non-citizen, and may be unfamiliar with or distrustful of calling a government hotline or submitting a grievance online.⁸⁸ The IG’s use of social media has included the creation of Instagram Reels, TikToks, and other short-form videos that highlight the approachability of the office while simultaneously call attention to annual reports, significant investigative findings, how to report wrongdoing, and more.

visited Apr. 2, 2026); N.Y. State Inspector Gen., LINKEDIN, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/newyorkstateig/> [<https://perma.cc/ZT6M-GQ5B>] (last visited Apr. 3, 2026).

86. See, e.g., N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM (Feb. 27, 2026), *How We Consume News and Information Has Changed — but Our Mission Hasn’t!*, https://www.instagram.com/p/DVRto_NkRzJ/ [<https://perma.cc/A2TN-QZAU>]; N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, *Forged in the Revolution. Still Shaping Our Democracy Today* (Jan. 30, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUJhOxBkThi/> [<https://perma.cc/L7BJ-KVKK>]; N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, *The Capitol Connection with David Giustina* (Feb. 2, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DURZ9XUkWeF/> [<https://perma.cc/2FN8-4SBH>]; N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, *Real Accountability on Keeping Guns Safe* (Nov. 25, 2025), https://www.instagram.com/p/DRfIU6je2_/ [<https://perma.cc/FB4H-KXEG>].

87. See, e.g., N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, <https://www.instagram.com/newyorkstateig> [<https://perma.cc/C2XZ-U44J>] (containing a URL of a page in the biography with a link to file a complaint); N.Y. State Inspector Gen. (@newyorkstateig), INSTAGRAM, *Report Fraud and Corruption to the New York State Inspector General* (Jan. 6, 2026), <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTL3sJ8kaCG/> [<https://perma.cc/G6B6-C35P>] (listing methods to report); N.Y. State Inspector Gen., LINKEDIN, *Overview* (Mar. 16, 2026, at 1:46 PM) <https://www.linkedin.com/company/newyorkstateig/> [<https://perma.cc/ZT6M-GQ5B>] (describing how to file a complaint).

88. See NAT’L ALL. ON MENTAL ILLNESS, POLL OF PUBLIC PERSPECTIVES ON 988 & CRISIS RESPONSE (2023) (finding that minority groups have a higher rate of fear that law enforcement may hurt them or a loved one while responding to a mental health crisis).

The establishment of social media accounts by federal IGs has been broader than their counterparts at the state and local level. An unofficial tally found that out of the 74 federal IGs, nearly 40 have at least one active social media account—still leaving many federal IGs without a significant social media presence.⁸⁹ When federal, state, and local IGs invest in their use of social media, and do so in a meaningful, creative, and authentic way, they can resonate with the communities they serve and show just how valuable a resource they are. Over the past two years, IGs' efforts to build a presence on social media has gone beyond merely seeking likes and follows. Through videos, graphics, articles, livestreams, and more, IGs are intaking complaints and tips, engaging with previously unengaged stakeholders, and putting themselves on the map like never before. And the entities they oversee and communities they serve are better off for it.

E. Inspectors General Should Focus on Outcomes More than Outputs

As Feldman and Eichenthal noted, “Ultimately, the true test of effective oversight is whether the work of the watchdog produces positive results—less fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption The measure of effective oversight is not the number of audits or investigation[s], but the effect and impact that those efforts have.”⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

In the face of President Trump's attacks on IG independence, policy makers and the public must respond to protect these vital institutions. Rather than tearing down these important efforts against government fraud, waste, abuse and corruption, we need IGs as truth tellers more than ever. But we need to go beyond just protecting the independence of federal IGs. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the IG Act, now is the time to make IGs both more independent and more effective to allow them to continue for another fifty years or more.

89. Inspectors General Director: OIG Public Affairs Point of Contact (PDF), COUNCIL OF THE INSPECTORS GEN. ON INTEGRITY & EFFICIENCY, <https://www.ignet.gov/content/inspectors-general-directory#:~:text=OIG> (last visited Apr. 20, 2026).

90. FELDMAN & EICHENTHAL, *supra* note 4, at 258.