



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Hearing:

“Protecting American Taxpayers: Highlighting Efforts to Protect Against Federal Waste, Fraud, and Mismanagement”

April 19, 2023

Good morning, and thank you to Chairman Lucas and Chairman Obernolte for holding this hearing today.

Inspectors General are a crucial part of a healthy, functioning government ecosystem. Congress entrusts federal agencies with taxpayer money to steward our national priorities. The 117th Congress, especially, saw the passage of a number of banner pieces of legislation. I’m proud that these bills – CHIPS and Science in particular – made heavy investments in our scientific enterprise. Congress charted a path for American scientific leadership, and now agencies are implementing those ambitious plans.

The landmark investments will allow federal science agencies to bring about new discoveries on the shoulders of their impressive accomplishments. The Department of Energy will continue leading us into a clean energy future, building upon their incredible breakthroughs in fusion energy. The National Science Foundation will support a strong, diverse STEM workforce that will foster the talent we need to maintain global leadership. NASA will bring humans back to the Moon while keeping our eyes on Mars, advancing human exploration capabilities.

All the while, the Offices of Inspector General will play a critical role in ensuring the billions of dollars authorized last Congress are properly spent. The funding increases give our federal science agencies substantial resources to fulfill our national goals. OIGs’ oversight of newly established programs will serve as necessary guideposts, offering decades of experience and lessons learned to initiatives still in their infancy. Recommendations from our panel’s Offices will ensure existing programs are able to scale up their activities to best utilize increased funds.

The 117th Congress’s legislative efforts provided many IG offices with additional funding to ensure they have the resources to oversee their home agencies. I hope the Offices are carefully considering how to best use that money. Today, we’ll hear from our witnesses about what challenges they face in ensuring their oversight efforts are top-notch. Meeting the increased oversight needs in part will require a larger workforce, which is easily addressed by additional funding. But some challenges may be more complicated. Perhaps a constituent agency is standing up a program unlike any it’s had before, meaning there is minimal precedent for

oversight within the agency's OIG. Maybe new initiatives involve inter-agency collaboration that will require more cooperation among IG offices. And maybe the cutting-edge priorities put forth by Congress will necessitate new metrics by which to judge federal science agencies.

As Ranking Member Foushee said in her opening statement, rigorous oversight goes hand in hand with supporting strong investments in federal research. I want to be clear that my emphasis on the need for robust and effective OIGs does not indicate a skepticism of increased funding for science agencies. Federal programs are strengthened by the recommendations of OIGs. In cases of waste, fraud, and abuse by recipients of grant money, taxpayer funds are recovered by the work of those appearing before our Committee today.

The investments made in CHIPS & Science enjoyed bipartisan support. Likewise, I believe all of us here today – on both sides of the aisle – support strong oversight that will facilitate the best use of taxpayer dollars. Thank you to the witnesses for your important work, and for appearing before us today to educate us on your efforts.

I yield back.