

Inspectors General (IGs) are officials within each federal agency who are charged with investigating evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Executive Branch. Over the last 25 years, investigations by IGs have saved taxpayers billions of dollars.

To ensure that IGs are independent and objective, Congress required that they be nonpartisan, specifically directing the President to appoint IGs “without regard to political affiliation.” Congress further provided that IGs should be appointed based “solely on the basis of integrity and demonstrated ability” in areas such as accounting and financial analysis.

At the request of Rep. Henry A. Waxman, this report examines the backgrounds of the 43 IGs appointed under the Inspector General Act by Presidents Bush and Clinton over the last 12 years. It finds that IG appointments have become increasingly politicized during the administration of President Bush. Whereas President Clinton typically appointed nonpartisan career public servants as IGs, President Bush has repeatedly chosen individuals with Republican political backgrounds. Over 60% of the IGs appointed by President Bush had prior political experience, such as service in a Republican White House or on a Republican congressional staff, while fewer than 20% had prior audit experience. In contrast, over 60% of the IGs appointed by President Clinton had prior audit experience, while fewer than 25% had prior political experience.

Specifically, the report finds:

Connections to White House: Over one-third of the IGs appointed by President Bush worked in Republican White Houses prior to their appointments as IGs. In contrast, President Clinton appointed no IGs who had worked in any Democratic White House prior to their appointments.

Other Political Connections: In total, 64% of the IGs appointed by President Bush held some sort of political position, such as a political appointment in a Republican administration or a position with a Republican member of Congress, before their appointments as IGs. Only 22% of the IGs appointed by President Clinton had worked in political positions before their appointments.

Political Campaign Contributions: Over half of the IGs appointed by President Bush had made contributions to his campaign or other Republican candidates. In comparison, only 25% of the IGs appointed by President Clinton had made any federal campaign contributions.

Substantive Audit Experience: Only 18% of the IGs appointed by President Bush had previous audit experience, such as experience in an IG's office, at the Government Accountability Office, or at a private accounting firm. In contrast, 66% of IGs appointed by President Clinton had audit experience prior to their appointments.

Prior political experience does not mean that an IG will act in a manner inconsistent with his or her responsibilities. Nonetheless, there have been several high-profile instances of questionable actions by Bush Administration IGs. For example, Janet Rehnquist, the former IG of the Department of Health and Human Services, delayed the release of a critical audit of Florida's pension system until after the reelection of Florida Governor Jeb Bush; Dara Corrigan, Ms. Rehnquist's successor at HHS, refused to investigate whether HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson or White House officials participated in the decision to withhold Medicare cost estimates from Congress; and Lt. Gen. Paul Mikolashek, the U.S. Army IG, reported that the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison were the result of "unauthorized actions taken by a few individuals," not the fault of senior military officials or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. These actions may be a symptom of the increasing politicization of IGs under President Bush.

### Documents and Links

- [The Report: The Politicization of Inspectors General](#)