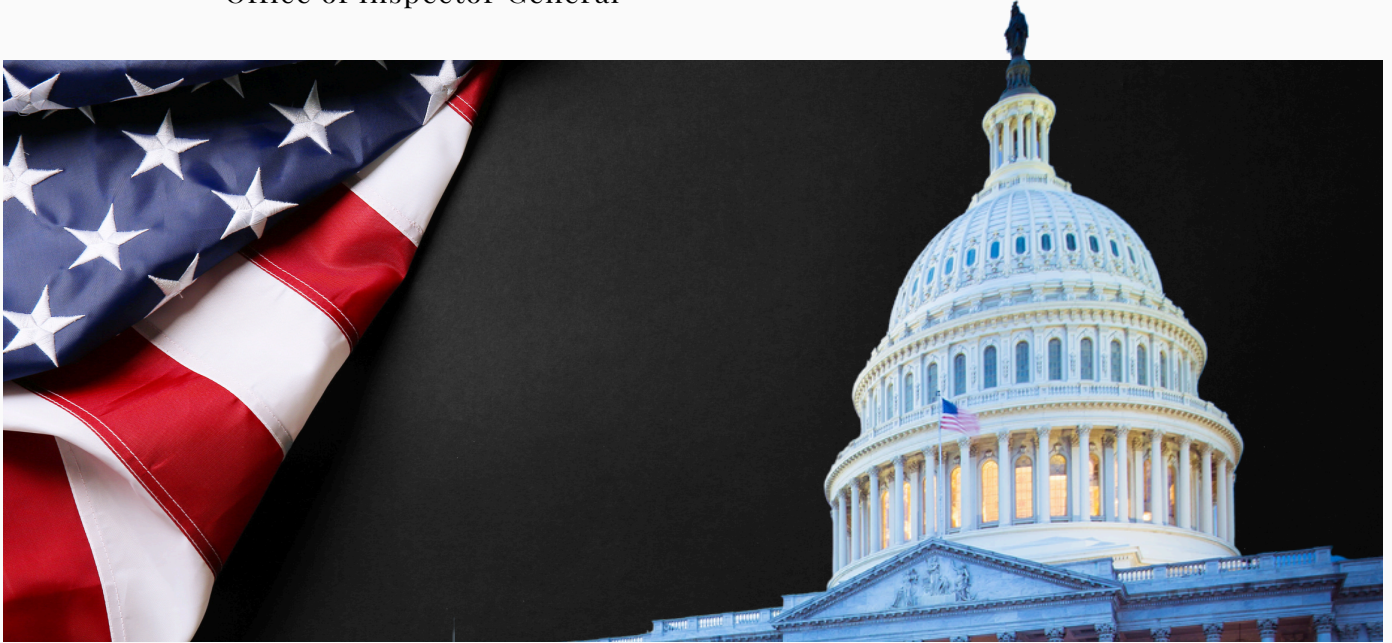




The Oversight Report

Your source for the latest updates from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General



Message from the Inspector General

THE HONORABLE MARK LEE GREENBLATT



I'm delighted to share the inaugural edition of the Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of Inspector General's (OIG) congressional newsletter. This newsletter aggregates information about our office's recent fair, objective, and independent oversight. We continue to address the highest-risk programs and operations within the DOI, including oversight of the DOI's infrastructure spending.

We're pleased to share with you information about training we've recently conducted for the Offices of Public Auditors in the U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States; recent congressional testimony; and a new educational video informing our stakeholders in the Department, Congress, and the public about the operation of our complaint hotline.

I recently marked my fifth-year anniversary as the DOI's Inspector General. It has been my honor to lead the DOI OIG team over the last five years. We have exceptional people whose dedication and hard work have resulted in the accomplishments and information presented in this newsletter.

IIJA and IRA Oversight

Congress provided more than \$28 billion in funding from the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA) for DOI programs. Likewise, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided the DOI with over \$6 billion.

These taxpayer dollars are intended to address legacy pollution, fund water and drought resilience programs, assist with wildland fire management, restore critical habitats, and help communities prepare for extreme weather events. The IIJA and IRA also provided resources to the DOI OIG: almost \$100 million in the IIJA and \$10 million in the IRA to oversee the DOI's management of these funds. Our task is to help ensure that these funds go towards the intended purposes and are used effectively and efficiently. With our fair, independent, and objective oversight, we are helping to safeguard these funds from waste, fraud, and abuse. Here is what we are doing:

- Initiating audits, inspections, and evaluations and engaging in fraud prevention and detection in high-risk areas, such as orphaned wells, abandoned mine lands, ecosystem restoration and western water. Our current portfolio includes 13 completed audits, 9 ongoing audits, and 22 anticipated new audits for FY 2025.
- Training antifraud professionals and coordinating with stakeholders to further our oversight mission, including Departmental program officials, grant recipients, state inspectors and auditors general, and state attorneys general.
- Facilitating oversight through data analytics and risk assessments.

A few of our recent IIJA and IRA reports include:

Flash Report: The U.S. Department of the Interior's Supplemental Funding to the Pacific Islands | [link](#)

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Should Improve Efforts for Expending Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Funds | [link](#)

Flash Report: The National Park Service's Inflation Reduction Act Hiring Efforts and Activities | [link](#)

Flash Report: The Bureau of Reclamation's Drought Mitigation Plans and Activities | [link](#)

The U.S. Department of the Interior Should Comply with Requirements in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Section 40206, "Critical Minerals Supply Chains and Reliability" | [link](#)



National Whistleblower Appreciation Day

As we do each year, [our office recognized National Whistleblower Appreciation Day](#). This year, we commemorated the occasion by releasing a new video,

The video explains how to submit a complaint on [doioig.gov](#) and describes what happens after complaints are received. We hope this video will serve as a resource for DOI employees and members of the public—including your constituents—who wish to learn more about reporting waste, fraud, abuse, or misconduct to our office.



Recent Congressional Testimony



On July 23, 2024, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Matthew Elliott gave testimony to a joint hearing of the House Committee on Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development.

He testified about OIG's prior work relating to Haskell Indian Nations University. He also shared information about our ongoing review to determine whether Bureau of Indian Education-operated post-secondary institutions are appropriately following laws and policies related to complaints of sexual harassment and misconduct. We look forward to sharing the results of that review with Congress and the public when it is complete.

[READ AIG ELLIOTT'S TESTIMONY HERE.](#)

Association of Pacific Islands Public Auditors 2024 Conference, “Bridging the Gap of Public Accountability and Transparency”

Congress has given the DOI Inspector General important audit responsibilities in several U.S. territories and in the freely associated states. One way that we meet those responsibilities is by providing training to the local Offices of Public Auditors (OPAs) in American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. Our training is intended to build the OPAs’ ability to perform high-quality audits and investigations, setting the foundation for good government that is better able to monitor the expenditures of Federal and local funds.



In August, four OIG employees—including our Assistant Inspectors General for Audits and Investigations—traveled to Palau for the Association of Pacific Islands Public Auditors (APIPA) week-long 2024 Conference. Nearly 500 government auditors, finance officials, and grant professionals—all of whom help manage funding provided by the U.S. to the territories and freely associated states—attended the conference. OIG staff gave the keynote address and led several training sessions on auditing and investigating. Attending and participating in the APIPA Conference enables us to reach many OPAs at once, thereby maximizing OIG resources as we help build audit and investigative capacity in the territories and freely associated states.

In addition to attending APIPA 2024, this summer we also hosted a series of four-hour virtual training sessions for OPAs on Auditing for Fraud, Assignment Planning, and Reporting. We had over 79 registered participants from nine OPAs, namely American Samoa, Chuuk, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Yap. Each session garnered rave reviews, requests for additional sessions, and an average rating of 4.7+ out of 5 stars.

From left, Kathleen Sedney, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations and Acting Chief of Staff, and Matthew Elliott, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations.

Indian Country White-Collar Crime Investigations Training

In September, several representatives from DOI OIG's Office of Investigations traveled to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia, New Mexico, to deliver the DOI OIG's first-ever Indian Country White-Collar Crime Investigations training course.

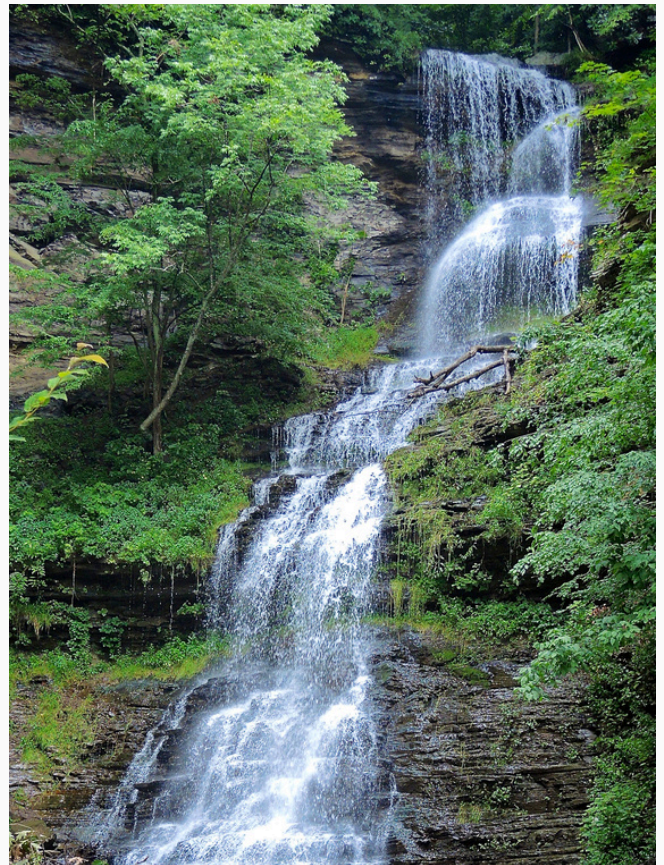
The objective of this course was to demystify fraud and public corruption for tribal law enforcement and to develop

fundamental skills for identifying and investigating white-collar crime.

It is our hope that more corruption and fraud in Indian Country can be detected by enhancing and strengthening the capability of tribal law enforcement to investigate these crimes. We also hope that this training effort and outreach will allow our office to serve as a resource for tribal law enforcement on these issues moving forward.

Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations All-Hands Training Event

In late September, we hosted an in-person All-hands training event with our AIE staff at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This three-day event enabled our team to meet mandatory training requirements and provided an opportunity for OIG staff to learn the latest on using AI to conduct oversight, grant fraud trends, and updated quality assurance practices.





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In our Next Issue

- The OIG's new recommendation tracking and follow-up process
- Meet our 2024 CIGIE Award winners
- Read our 2025 Oversight Plan

If you have questions about our office, mission, or information in this newsletter, please contact Erica E. Paulson, Associate Inspector General, Communications and Congressional Affairs

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