



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

April 30, 2024

The Honorable Sean J. Cooksey  
Chair  
Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463

The Honorable Ellen L. Weintraub  
Vice Chair  
Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463

Re: Federal Election Commission Inspector General Vacancy

Dear Chair Cooksey and Vice Chair Weintraub,

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) respectfully requests that the Federal Election Commission (“FEC”) move expeditiously to recruit, hire, and onboard an experienced and motivated individual to serve as FEC Inspector General (“IG”). Given the increasing demands on the FEC to enforce federal campaign finance laws in the 2024 congressional and presidential election cycle, ongoing challenges that the FEC has experienced regarding its operations and the conduct of commissioners, as well as the agencies’ prior challenges in filling this role, the FEC needs and the public demands that this position be filled with all deliberate speed and care.

The FEC Inspector General plays a critical role to ensure the FEC functions effectively and efficiently on behalf of the American public to uphold our nation’s campaign finance regime. Before he left the FEC to become the Commodities Futures Trading Commission IG this month, former FEC IG Christopher Skinner managed a \$2.2 million budget, oversaw the day-to-day operations of its Office of Inspector General (“OIG”), developed internal policies and procedures in support of the OIG Strategic Plan, modernized the OIG hotline system, and restructured the office to improve OIG efficiencies and internal controls.<sup>1</sup> The next IG will be tasked with building upon Skinner’s work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commodities Futures Trading Commission, *CFTC Appoints Christopher Skinner as Inspector General*, Apr. 10, 2024, <https://www.cftc.gov/PressRoom/PressReleases/8890-24#:~:text=Mr..served%20as%20IG%20since%202019>; Federal Election Commission, *FEC Names Christopher Skinner Inspector General*, Apr. 12, 2019, <https://www.fec.gov/updates/fec-names-christopher-skinner-inspector-general/#:~:text=WASHINGTON%E2%80%94The%20Federal%20Election%20Commission.%2C%20inspections%2C%20and%20internal%20audits>.

The next FEC Inspector General will have to tackle legacy challenges as well as more recent issues that call into question the agency's efficacy. The FEC has also faced significant public scrutiny and congressional oversight to address long-standing obstacles such as inaction and outright refusals to faithfully enforce the law resulting from ideological divisions, low staff morale, and other lingering vacancies.<sup>2</sup> The agency also continues to lack a functional or transparent process for recusals despite public reports that, as recently as this month, one commissioner posted a message on a public X account that he uses to discuss agency business, endorsing Senator Ted Cruz's re-election campaign, while the agency is reviewing a campaign finance complaint against the Senator's campaign.<sup>3</sup> More recently, OIG cited that Commissioner James "Trey" Trainor III violated Commission guidance by failing to cooperate with an ongoing OIG investigation about his appearance at a local Republican party event in which he was promoted as a member of former President Trump's "Elections Team."<sup>4</sup>

The last time the FEC had an Inspector General vacancy, the agency struggled mightily to fill the role. In March 2017, long-time IG Lynne McFarland retired from the agency, following allegations she inappropriately released hundreds of confidential employee comments to agency management.<sup>5</sup> The hiring process for McFarland's successor took more than two years, marred by a series of false starts and other obstacles. The FEC took more than a year to advertise for the role and then had to post an announcement two more times. According to reporting by the Center for Public Integrity, in May 2018, "internal agency disagreements led to an FEC human resources official canceling the inspector job posting without her bosses' authorization, then resigning, forcing the FEC to begin the hiring process anew."<sup>6</sup> The next attempt to hire an IG was delayed because of the 2018 government shut down and in February 2019, another potential candidate fell through. Ultimately, Skinner's appointment at the FEC in July 2019 came after OIG became "largely nonfunctional" for more than six months after the office's lone deputy IG resigned.<sup>7</sup> During that period, OIG was unable to conduct formal investigations and audits and could not

---

<sup>2</sup> Dave Levinthal, *Third time's a charm? Federal Election Commission will try – again – to find an internal watchdog*, The Center for Public Integrity, Apr. 23, 2019,

<https://publicintegrity.org/politics/federal-election-commission-fec-inspector-general/>.

<sup>3</sup> Zach Everson, X, Apr. 22, 2024,

[https://twitter.com/z\\_everson/status/1782507422420000931?s=46&t=-tkA4Plhw0ldXWgtY5kv1A](https://twitter.com/z_everson/status/1782507422420000931?s=46&t=-tkA4Plhw0ldXWgtY5kv1A).

<sup>4</sup> Federal Election Commission Office of the Inspector General, Investigative Summary I22INV00033, *Allegations of Ethics Violations by an FEC Commissioner*, Aug. 7, 2023,

<https://www.fec.gov/resources/cms-content/documents/Investigative-Summary-I22INV00033.pdf>;

Madison Hall, *FEC Commissioner Trey Trainor cleared of ethics violation after Insider reporting spurred investigation*, Business Insider, Aug. 8, 2023,

<https://www.businessinsider.com/fec-commissioner-trey-trainor-cleared-of-ethics-violation-2023-8>.

<sup>5</sup> Levinthal, Apr. 23, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

issue reports or findings, undermining the mission of the agency and drawing the ire of Congress.<sup>8</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The need for a permanent Inspector General at the FEC could not be more pressing. While the public servants currently working in the FEC OIG are dedicated and rigorous in the performance of their duties and the FEC might appoint an Acting IG in the short term, as Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) has noted, permanent IG's are critical because "[e]ven the best acting Inspector General lacks the standing to make lasting changes needed to improve his or her office."<sup>9</sup> Filling this vacancy is critical to ensure the integrity of the agency tasked with enforcing and regulating national campaign finance laws. We implore you to approach this search with the seriousness and urgency that it demands.

Sincerely,



Noah Bookbinder  
President



Donald K. Sherman  
Executive Director & Chief Counsel

cc:

The Hon. Bryan Steil  
Chairman  
House Committee on Administration

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Rep. Zoe Logren, Chair, House Administration Committee to The Honorable Ellen Weintraub, Chair, Federal Election Commission, et. al., Apr. 1, 2019, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5793235-2019-04-02-Letter-to-FEC.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Ackerman, *Maloney Named Interim SEC Inspector General*, Wall Street Journal, Jan. 27, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204573704577187443078314650>.

April 30, 2024  
Page 4

The Hon. Amy Klobuchar  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

The Hon. Gary Peters  
Chairman  
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee