

Testimony Submitted for the Record
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Hearing on the Nomination of Anthony D'Esposito to be Inspector General at the U.S.
Department of Labor
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Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the nominations for watchdog positions before this Committee, including Anthony D'Esposito for the position of Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). We also appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on the apparently withdrawn nomination of Paul Ingrassia for the position of special counsel in the Office of the Special Counsel (OSC). Although his nomination may have been withdrawn, as far as the public is aware, Mr. Ingrassia still serves as White House liaison to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).¹ His continued service in this position warrants the scrutiny of this committee.

As a former Senior Counsel on this Committee, I have worked closely with government watchdogs to promote accountability and efficiency. I have also vetted numerous nominees for positions as independent government watchdogs including Inspectors General, the Office of Government Ethics and the Office of Special Counsel. My organization, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting corruption and promoting accountable, transparent and ethical governance. CREW vigorously advocates for strong independent oversight because we recognize the crucial role that these institutions play in ferreting out government waste, fraud and abuse on a nonpartisan basis. These institutions, however, are only as strong as the people chosen to lead them. It should therefore be a bipartisan priority that individuals who are nominated and confirmed to oversight roles have the necessary qualifications and temperament to successfully perform these crucial jobs.

Anthony D'Esposito's Nomination

When Congress passed the Inspector General Act of 1978, it believed that "by establishing independent Inspectors General within each major Federal agency taxpayers' funds could be more prudently used and accurately accounted for; the government would be better equipped to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse; and the public's confidence in their government would be enhanced."² In the nearly 50 years since the first inspector general positions were established, these officials have provided critical independent oversight that improved the integrity of our government. As I have previously testified before a

¹ Seung Min Kim & Kevin Freking, *Trump pick to lead federal watchdog agency withdraws after offensive text messages were revealed*, Associated Press (Oct. 21, 2025, 9:05 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-special-counsel-ingrassia-texts-d11db9dc83767040f56a16766a3c240b>.

² U.S. Dep't of Labor, *About OIG*, <https://www.oig.dol.gov/about.htm> (last visited Oct. 21, 2025).

congressional panel, “inspector general terms were not designed to be tied to that of the president, because they provide oversight and accountability regardless of political party or who sits in the Oval Office.”³ President Trump’s actions, including his unprecedented decision to unilaterally and illegally fire at least 17 inspectors general, en masse, including the former inspector general for the Department of Labor, Larry Turner, has put the apolitical nature of inspectors general in risk.⁴

That is why it is crucial that the individuals we select to serve as inspectors general embody the apolitical ethical values inherent in the statutorily mandated mission. Unfortunately, former Rep. D’Esposito’s background and track record indicate that he is not the right person for the job.

While in Congress, the New York Times reported that Mr. D’Esposito may have violated House “ethics rules designed to prevent nepotism and corruption.”⁵ Included among the House ethics rules that all members are bound to are prohibitions on engaging in a sexual relationship with an employee who works under the supervision of the relevant Member and prohibitions on employing spouses and relatives.⁶ Mr. D’Esposito reportedly hired a woman he was having an affair with, likely violating multiple ethics rules.⁷ Additionally, although Mr. D’Esposito never married, he did hire his fiancée’s daughter to work as a special assistant in his district office, a decision that ethics experts argued violated the spirit of the House rule prohibiting nepotism.⁸ At minimum, this report raises serious concerns that Mr. D’Esposito ran afoul of House ethics rules during his time in office.⁹

These abuses follow Mr. D’Esposito’s time in the New York Police Department (NYPD) and as a member of the Hempstead town council where he also was mired in ethics-related controversies. While on the town council, a court held that his failure to abstain from a vote benefitting his family violated the spirit and intent of the Town Ethics Code.¹⁰ The New York Daily News reported that, with the NYPD, Mr. D’Esposito was accused of lying to a grand jury which resulted in a \$250,000 settlement, of conducting illegal stop-and-frisks and false

³ See VA First, *Veteran Second: The Biden-Harris Legacy: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight & Investigations of the H. Comm. on Veterans’ Affs.*, 119th Cong. 38-44 (2025) (statement of Donald Sherman, Executive Director and Chief Counsel, CREW).

⁴ Chris Piper, *President Trump’s firing of inspectors general threatens government accountability and efficiency*, P’ship for Pub. Serv. (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://ourpublicservice.org/blog/president-trumps-firing-of-inspectors-general-threatens-government-accountability-and-efficiency/>; Reveal Podcast, *Exclusive: Trump fired This Top Watchdog. Now He’s Speaking Out*, Mother Jones (Mar. 26, 2025), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/03/trump-inspectors-general-mass-firings-labor-department-larry-turner/>.

⁵ Nicholas Fandos, *A Congressman Had an Affair. Then He Put His Lover on the Payroll*, N.Y. Times (Sept. 23, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/23/nyregion/anthony-desposito-affair-congress.html>.

⁶ *Id.*; House Rule 23, cl. 18.

⁷ Fandos, *supra* note 5.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Gillen v. Town of Hempstead Town Bd.*, 96 N.Y.S.3d 492, 510 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 2019).

arrests and detentions resulting in another \$82,500 of settlements and of wrongfully seizing a gold chain during an arrest that led to an internal affairs corruption investigation that was partially substantiated.¹¹

Inspectors general are intended to protect against corruption, not be agents of it. That is why it is so critically important for inspectors general to be nonpartisan and beyond ethical reproach. Moreover, his previous employment history suggests a checkered history of ethical noncompliance, raising serious questions as to whether nominating an individual like Mr. D'Esposito to root out waste, fraud and abuse in a federal agency is a bit like having a fox guard the henhouse.

Paul Ingrassia's Nomination and Continued Service

Mr. Ingrassia has exhibited a pattern of conduct that demonstrates that he is uniquely unqualified to head the OSC, an independent federal agency whose mission is to “safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices (PPPs), especially reprisal for whistleblowing” through its enforcement of various federal laws including the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.¹² We join a bipartisan group of senators who have already indicated opposition to Mr. Ingrassia's nomination.¹³ Regardless of whether his nomination is formally withdrawn, there remain serious concerns about his continued role as White House liaison to DHS. He has shown repeated disdain for the civil servants and has engaged in vile, dangerous rhetoric unsuited for any continued role as a part of the federal government, especially one tasked with managing the hiring process for senior officials at DHS.

Mr. Ingrassia most certainly lacks the experience necessary to be special counsel. The special counsel must have the requisite experience to serve federal workers and the American people. By law, the special counsel must be “an attorney who, by demonstrated ability, background, training, or experience, is especially qualified to carry out the functions of the position.”¹⁴ According to a review conducted by the Project on Government Oversight, “the previous four special counsels—appointed by Republican and Democratic presidents—had on average approximately 23 years of career legal experience before

¹¹ Michael Gartland, *With U.S. House in play in 2024 elections, NYPD record of Rep. Anthony D'Esposito under fire*, N.Y. Daily News (July 25, 2024, 11:27 AM), <https://www.nydailynews.com/2024/07/08/with-u-s-house-in-play-in-2024-elections-nypd-record-of-rep-anthony-despositio-under-fire/>.

¹² U.S. Off. of Special Couns., *About OSC*, <https://osc.gov/Agency> (last visited Oct. 21, 2025).

¹³ Hailey Fuchs, *Thune hopes White House withdraws Ingrassia nomination*, Politico (Oct. 20, 2025, 7:30 PM), <https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2025/10/20/congress/ingrassia-thune-republicans-00616010>; Rebecca Beitsch, *Democrats urge spiking of Trump watchdog nominee who would 'traumatize' workforce*, The Hill (June 26, 2025), <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/5371061-democrats-oppose-ingrassia-nomination-whistleblower/>.

¹⁴ 5 U.S.C. § 1211(b).

serving” in that role.¹⁵ Included among these is President Trump’s nominee from his first term to serve as Special Counsel, Mr. Henry J. Kerner, who prior to that role served as a prosecutor for 18 years and also served on the staff of the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform where he led investigations into government waste and whistleblower protections.¹⁶ I served with Mr. Kerner on the House Oversight Committee and was responsible for vetting Mr. Kerner on behalf of this Committee’s then-Ranking Member, Senator Claire McCaskill. Comparing Mr. Kerner and Mr. Ingrassia’s experience is instructive. Mr. Ingrassia was not admitted to the New York State Bar until July 2024, giving him just a single year of experience as a barred attorney. And, unlike Mr. Kerner, he does not appear to have any experience enforcing any of the statutes which the Office of Special Counsel is required to enforce and, instead, has spent his year as an attorney serving in White House liaison roles.¹⁷

In addition to lacking the experience and qualifications to be special counsel, Mr. Ingrassia also appears to lack the necessary temperament. The special counsel must remain independent, ensuring that federal workers are treated fairly and without bias, especially in protecting whistleblowers who take great risk to expose wrongdoing and face retaliation by their agencies for it. Mr. Ingrassia has a history of comments and actions indicating that he would utterly fail in these tasks. He has, among other sentiments, referred to civil servants as “parasites” who “leech off the diminishing lifeblood of the dying Republic” and “bugmen that overwhelmingly have no real skill sets to offer.”¹⁸ He has repeatedly called for the ouster of nonpartisan career civil servants and demanded loyalty rather than merit, going so far as to urge the Department of Justice to hire based on “exceptional loyalty” to the president and advocated for the purge of any federal employee who investigated or prosecuted cases related to the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol.¹⁹ In a lawsuit filed earlier this year, the FBI’s former acting director, Brian Driscoll, alleges that Mr. Ingrassia asked him multiple questions about his political affiliations in a vetting interview for a high-level FBI position, including “Do you agree that the FBI agents who ‘stormed’ Mar-a-Lago ... should be held

¹⁵ See Joe Spielberger, *Good Government Groups to Senate: Oppose OSC nominee Paul Ingrassia*, POGO (July 21, 2025),

<https://www.pogo.org/policy-letters/good-government-groups-to-senate-oppose-osc-nominee-paul-ingrassia>.

¹⁶ See Press Release, U.S. Merit Sys. Prot. Bd., MSPB Welcomes New Board Member Henry J. Kerner (June 3, 2024), https://www.mspb.gov/publicaffairs/press_releases/Henry_Kerner_Press_Release.pdf.

¹⁷ Amanda Moore, *EXCLUSIVE: Trump White House lawyer wasn’t actually an attorney when firm said he represented Andrew Tate*, Daily Dot, (Mar. 23, 2025),

<https://www.dailydot.com/viral-politics/paul-ingrassia-white-house-lawyer-andrew-tate/>.

¹⁸ Paul Ingrassia, *President Trump’s Cabinet Picks Demonstrate a Serious Commitment to Return Power to The American People*, Ass’n of Mature Am. Citizens (Nov. 19, 2024),

<https://amac.us/newsline/politics/newsline/politics/president-trumps-cabinet-picks-demonstrate-a-serious-commitment-to-return-power-to-the-american-people/>.

¹⁹ Katherine Faulders et al., *After clashes with AG’s top aide, a White House liaison pushing ‘loyalty’ to Trump at DOJ is reassigned*: Sources, ABC News, (Feb. 24, 2025),

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/after-clashes-ags-top-aide-white-house-liaison/story?id=119108504>; Erich Wagner, *House Dems warn Trump’s special counsel pick is anathema to job’s duties*, Gov’t Exec. (June 26, 2025),

<https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/06/house-dems-warn-trumps-special-counsel-pick-anathema-jobs-duties/406359/>; See also Spielberger *supra* note 15.

accountable?”²⁰ Federal law clearly prohibits questions about political affiliation in the hiring process. Mr. Driscoll refused to answer these questions, because they could be in violation of federal law, and he alleges that he was later told that he “failed” the interview.²¹

A federal official, whether they be the White House liaison to DHS or the head of OSC, must display honesty and integrity, conducting themselves at all times in an ethical manner and in a politically impartial manner. Mr. Ingrassia’s private conduct indicates a repugnant pattern of behavior that should bar him from the role of special counsel or his current position as a White House liaison. According to a recent Politico article, Mr. Ingrassia allegedly sent texts expressing shocking sentiments such as “MLK Jr. was the 1960s George Floyd and his ‘holiday’ should be ended and tossed into the seventh circle of hell where it belongs,” and “I do have a Nazi streak in me from time to time,” among other racist and antisemitic messages.²² Mr. Ingrassia has engaged in similarly concerning rhetoric in the past.²³ Earlier this month, Politico reported that Mr. Ingrassia faced an official investigation over alleged sexual harassment stemming from an incident at an Orlando hotel where he allegedly contrived to have a lower-level female colleague share a hotel room with him while he was serving as White House liaison for DHS.²⁴ Together, these actions and statements indicate that Mr. Ingrassia does not have the requisite temperament to serve as special counsel or as a White House liaison.

Our Constitution entrusts the Senate with the duty of giving its advice and consent on presidential nominations.²⁵ CREW strongly urges the committee to exercise this constitutional responsibility by rejecting Mr. D’Esposito’s nomination. He lacks the ethical fortitude and temperament necessary to serve in such a key oversight role and ensure that we identify, prevent and deter government waste, fraud and abuse rather than perpetuate it. Furthermore, as “the Senate’s primary oversight committee with broad jurisdiction over government operations generally and DHS in particular,”²⁶ this Committee ought to consider and opine on whether it is appropriate for Mr. Ingrassia to continue to serve as the White House liaison to DHS.

²⁰ Complaint at 16-20, *Driscoll, Jr. v. Patel*, 1:25-cv-03109, (D.D.C. Sept. 10, 2025), ECF No. 1.

²¹ *Id.* at 19; *See also* Perry Stein, *FBI leaders allege in lawsuit they were unlawfully fired over political loyalty*, Wash. Post, (Sept. 10, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/09/10/trump-fbi-fired-lawsuit-loyalty/>.

²² Daniel Lippman, *Trump nominee says MLK Jr. holiday belongs in ‘hell’ and that he has ‘Nazi streak,’ according to texts*, Politico (Oct. 20, 2025, 3:29 PM), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/20/paul-ingrassia-racist-text-messages-nazi-00613608>.

²³ *See, e.g.*, Spielberger *supra* note 15.

²⁴ Daniel Lippman, *Key Trump nominee accused of sexual harassment*, Politico (Oct. 9, 2025, 8:22 PM), https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/09/ingrassia-trump-harassment-dhs-00596545?utm_medium=email&utm_source=substack. A DHS spokesperson stated that a human resources investigation into Mr. Ingrassia had ended and cleared him, and said they were not aware of an IG investigation into the matter. *Id.*

²⁵ U.S. Const. art. II, § 2 cl. 2.

²⁶ S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. & Gov’t Affs., *Jurisdiction and Rules*, <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/about/jurisdiction-and-rules/> (last visited Oct. 22, 2025).