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Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., speaks during a hearing on Capitol Hill on May 20, 2025. He argued in a press call that President Donald Trump has created "an environment of intimidation that makes it difficult for" inspectors general to perform their roles. ANNA MONEYMAKER / GETTY IMAGES

*Oversight*

# Government oversight employees detail fears of retaliation under Trump administration in new Senate report

President Donald Trump has, so far, fired 19 inspectors general, who are independent watchdogs that investigate waste, fraud and abuse in federal agencies.

[SEAN MICHAEL NEWHOUSE](#) | MAY 21, 2025

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**D**emocrats on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on Wednesday [released a report](#) featuring anonymous testimony from employees at various offices of inspectors general about how their oversight work has been impacted by President Donald Trump’s firings of 19 of the agency watchdogs.

“These OIGs are still staffed by competent professionals, and they continue their critical work to root out fraud, waste and abuse,” according to the report. “However, President Trump’s firing of their leadership puts that work at risk, undermines the independence of these nonpartisan watchdogs and sends a message of intimidation to anyone else who was considering criticizing this administration.”

One OIG employee said that between the [deferred resignation program](#) and [hiring freeze](#), as well as a reduced budget, attrition and retirements, the office has lost 30% of its staff. Another said that their IG workforce is expected to shrink by about 10-15% and, consequently, may not be able to complete all of their planned audits this year.

“Governmentwide staffing cuts have compromised these offices’ ability to conduct audits, to do evaluations and investigations, which expose our nation to even greater risk of fraud, waste and abuse,” said Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., the ranking member on the committee during a press call Tuesday.



OIG staffers also shared concerns about their confidence and low morale.

“We now have to do our work based on who’s in power...Everybody here is operating out of fear of being fired at any time,” said one employee.

“Folks are rattled...I’ve never heard a line-level auditor say ‘should I be worried about my job...is someone going to post my family on X,’” said a different employee. “These are questions that have never been asked, because frankly they were unthinkable.”

An OIG staffer who spoke with the committee said that their office is “terrified” to disagree with the Department of Government Efficiency, the Elon Musk-backed initiative that has led to [widespread layoffs across the federal government](#).

The panel found that, if agencies implemented all of the open recommendations from the 19 fired IGs, it could save the federal government \$175 billion. That’s \$5 billion more than what [DOGE estimates it has saved](#), which is itself a number that [critics say is inflated](#).

“The administration's actions to remove IGs and replace them with unprofessional DOGE operators completely disregards the tried and true practices of independent oversight, and DOGE is failing to effectively cut costs [unlike] what we're seeing from the IGs that were fired,” Peters said.

Senate HSGAC Democrats also reported that the axed IGs had a collective monetary impact of more than \$50 billion in fiscal 2024 alone by identifying potential savings in federal programs and investigative recoveries in criminal, civil and administrative cases.

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During the week of his second inauguration, [Trump fired 18 IGs](#), including six appointed during his first term, who the White House characterized as “rogue, partisan bureaucrats who have weaponized the justice system against their political enemies.” The president in February [fired the IG for the U.S. Agency for International Development](#) after he reported that the [agency’s effective elimination](#) would make it more difficult to conduct oversight of foreign aid.

“I think it's clear that Donald Trump doesn't want to have folks who are looking at what he's doing and finding out that he may be engaged in illegal or corrupt practices, and he has created an environment of intimidation that makes it difficult for these folks to do their job, which I would argue the American people want them to do, and they want them to do it aggressively,” Peters said. [G](#)

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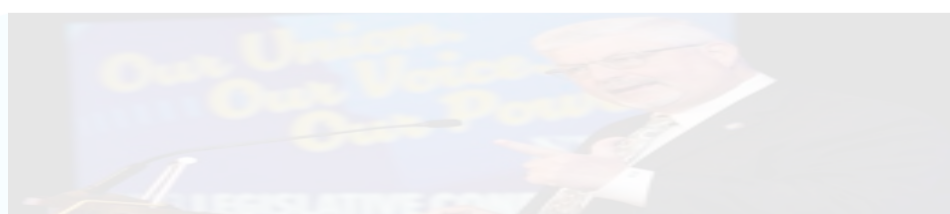


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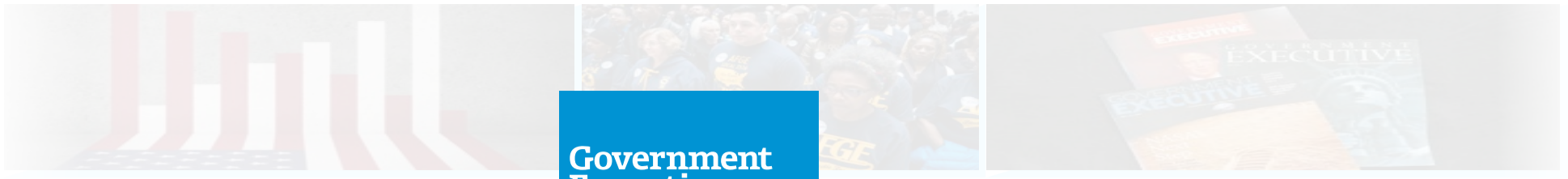


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