



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2019

Mike Truppa (312) 286-5077, miketruppa@gmail.com
John Holden (773) 642-9332, jmholden51@hotmail.com

City Must Expand Powers Of Inspectors General To Combat Chronic Corruption, Civic Group, Former Ig Say

*BPI LIKENS LOOPHOLES IN IG SYSTEM TO “SWISS CHEESE,” PRESCRIBES BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM IN OPEN LETTER TO MAYOR-ELECT LIGHTFOOT.
FORMER IG DAVID HOFFMAN BACKS PROPOSAL*

CHICAGO (April 11, 2019) – The Inspectors General (IGs) who police government ethics in Chicago lack crucial powers that limit their ability to check Chicago’s culture of corruption and promote the long-stymied quest for governmental integrity, according to an analysis released today by Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI).

In an “open letter” to Mayor-Elect Lightfoot, BPI urges her to take the steps necessary to strengthen the oversight powers of Chicago’s various inspectors general and make her campaign pledge to reform local government a reality.

BPI’s three-part Blueprint for Reform is based on extensive research and consultation with inspectors general both in Chicago and elsewhere.

“With Mayor-Elect Lightfoot set to take office, the time is right to take a fresh look at Chicago’s problematic inspector general system,” said BPI Executive Director Hoy McConnell. “Many of its inspectors general lack independence, while others lack essential powers or are crippled by limited jurisdiction. If the crucial reforms are to be made, our new mayor will play a pivotal role in making them happen.”

Standing with McConnell, David Hoffman, former Chicago Inspector General, said, “Strong and independent Inspectors General help make governments cleaner, more fair, and more transparent. They protect our money from being wasted. They make it harder for those in power to use the levers of government for their own private interest rather than the public interest. And they make it easier for honest, hard-working employees to act ethically when improper pressures occur.

“We are fortunate that such an excellent Chicago institution as BPI has taken the time to study the details of the Chicago IG system and to produce a compelling report about how to improve it. Its recommendations are right on target and would unquestionably strengthen integrity in City government if they are implemented.

“We are also fortunate to have Lori Lightfoot as our Mayor-Elect. I have known her for over 20 years, from our time together in the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and there is no one I would trust more to pursue a strong and effective reform agenda to enhance integrity and transparency in City government.”

Hoffman, a former federal prosecutor, served as the City IG from 2005 to 2009. BPI is a 50-year-old public-interest law and policy center focused on equity, opportunity, and justice. The organization has a longstanding commitment to bolstering the powers and effectiveness of Chicago’s inspectors general. In 2011, BPI published an analysis of best practices in the field. In 2013, it represented Chicago’s inspector general in litigation over access to subpoenaed documents and the independence of his office. BPI was later appointed special state’s attorney to represent the Cook County Inspector General in litigation regarding the office’s jurisdiction over Cook County agencies headed by independently elected officials.

BPI’s review of Chicago’s current inspector general system revealed numerous shortcomings, including:

- The City of Chicago Inspector General can investigate aldermen only for limited acts of misconduct and only if complaints are written and signed,
- The City IG cannot enforce subpoenas with counsel of its own choosing, but must use the attorneys of the very city it is supposed to oversee,
- Because office staffing is subject to approval by the City’s budget office, the City IG does not have authority to fully manage its own affairs.
- Inspector general offices at other local governments—Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Park District, Chicago Housing Authority and Chicago City Colleges—also suffer serious gaps in their independence and powers. One agency, the Chicago Transit Authority, does not even have its own inspector general.
- At Chicago Public Schools, the Board of Education can remove the IG from office at any time and for any reason by a simple majority vote. Nor does the Public Schools inspector general have full control over investigations, as investigating authority is fragmented among several departments.
- Inspectors general at the Housing Authority, Park District and City Colleges can only make “recommendations” on staffing their offices, while their budgets are set by the very boards they are supposed to oversee. Inspectors general at the Park District and City Colleges also lack subpoena power, and City College contractors have no duty to report wrongdoing to the inspector general’s office.

To address these and other deficiencies, BPI proposes a three-pronged Blueprint for Reform focused on:

- **Inspector General Independence**
Each inspector general office must be provided with the budget, reporting and managerial independence necessary to assure that it has the resources necessary to do its work effectively. Sufficient protections should make certain that each is insulated from political retribution for undertaking sensitive investigations.

- **Inspector General Powers and Jurisdiction**

The inspectors general should have the power to investigate all complaints, even anonymous ones, and should have full subpoena powers. They should also have the responsibility to monitor large contracts and to do background integrity reviews on senior hires.

- **Inspector General Collaboration**

A protocol needs to be created for the six Chicago inspectors general to work collaboratively and synergistically together, as they should.

“This inspector general structure—which is supposed to protect Chicago against corruption, but for all the world looks like Swiss cheese—undoubtedly helps to explain Chicago’s inability to create a culture of governmental integrity,” McConnell said. “We believe that implementation of our proposal will lead to a more efficient and more accountable city government, demonstrating that Chicago is not only ready for reform, but is finally serious about achieving it. We are encouraged by Mayor-elect Lightfoot’s focus on restoring integrity to Chicago government, and today, we urge her to seize upon the opportunity to strengthen the inspector general system.”

#