

**NOMINATIONS OF JOHN WALK AND
THOMAS BELL**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

NOMINATIONS OF JOHN WALK TO BE INSPECTOR GENERAL,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND THOMAS BELL TO BE
INSPECTOR GENERAL, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

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NOMINATIONS OF JOHN WALK AND THOMAS BELL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Rand Paul, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Paul [presiding], Hawley, Ernst, Moody, Peters, Hassan, and Blumenthal.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PAUL

Chairman PAUL. The hearing will come to order today. The Committee meets to consider two nominations. John Walk, is nominated to be Inspector General (IG) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Mr. Walk currently works as a senior advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture, and previously served in various roles within the Executive Branch over the last 20 years.

Thomas March Bell, is nominated to be Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Mr. Bell currently serves as General Counsel (GC) and Senior Investigative Counsel on the House Committee on Administration. He previously served in various roles at the Department of Justice (DOJ), the House of Representatives, and the Senate.

The written statements have been submitted for the record.¹

In the interest of time, I will forego opening remarks. Senator Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PETERS²

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to our nominees, and congratulations on your nominations. Good to see that you have your family here with you as well.

I think it is important for this Committee to hear from and question nominees at public hearings, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to do that today. However, I am disappointed that we have had almost no opportunity to conduct public oversight of this administration and its top officials after they have been confirmed.

Mr. Chair, since the beginning of this year, you have held just one hearing, one hearing, where an administration official testified,

¹The written statements appear in the Appendix on pages 17 and 51.

²The prepared statement of Senator Peters appears in the Appendix on page 15.

and that was more than six months ago. Just to put in perspective, when I was Chairman during the Biden administration, we had 10 hearings with administration officials at this point, in that first year. 1 versus 10. Year's not over, we could catch up and get to the 10, but that's a pretty slim agenda.

You have only held also one legislative markup this year. This Committee has wide ranging legislative and oversight responsibilities. There are several bills that Members on both sides of the aisle want to debate in advance, and there are numerous oversight issues administration officials need to answer for.

Chair Paul, I hope you will call on the leaders of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) to testify before this Committee before the end of the year. This Committee's annual threats hearing provides a critical opportunity for the American people to hear from our national security leaders about wide raging threats that are currently facing our Nation.

Now, turning to our nominees. This year, the administration has launched an unprecedented attack on the independence of inspector generals. These are nonpartisan watchdogs responsible for combating waste, fraud, and abuse across the government. Since taking office, President Trump has fired 19 inspectors general, and not once did he provide the legally required notification or explanation to Congress.

President Trump has also attacked acting IGs. Just two weeks ago, he fired the acting IG for the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) in apparent act of retaliation. As the administration continues to undermine independent oversight bodies, it's more important now than ever that we have qualified nonpartisan individuals to serve in these roles.

Thomas March Bell has been nominated to serve as the IG of the Department of Health and Human Services. If confirmed, Mr. Bell will be tasked with overseeing one of the largest departments, including \$2.3 trillion budget, and over 100 programs. Given Mr. Bell's highly partisan track record, I am concerned that he will instead use the IGs office to pursue political aims, attacking women's reproductive rights, for example.

What does the record show? Mr. Bell led a partisan investigation into an alleged sale of fetal tissue for profit, a claim that has already been thoroughly investigated and thoroughly debunked. He served as the Chief of Staff of the Office of Civil Rights at HHS in the first Trump administration where he limited women's access to reproductive care. Mr. Bell is anything but a non-partisan.

Currently, he's investigating a Democratic fundraising platform, even though its Republican counterpart faces the exact same issues. He's only focusing on the Democratic platform. He's plays politics with every oversight role that he has had.

Mr. Bell is not unique. I am also concerned about the independence of President Trump's nominee for IG to the Department of Agriculture. John Walk is currently serving as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture, and as the Acting Director of the Office of Tribal Relations. He also serves as the Acting Deputy Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services.

How can we trust that the Secretary's right-hand man will provide independent oversight of the very policies and the very programs that he has implemented? I think the answer is clear; we can't. I am concerned that instead of acting impartially, Mr. Walk will cater to the administration.

Still, I thank the nominees for being here today, and I look forward to asking and hearing from you questions that are posed.

Chairman PAUL. It is the practice of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) to swear and witness with the nominees. Please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony you will give before this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

Thank you. It's the standard practice of this Committee for the Chair to ask nominees the following question. Do you agree, without reservation, to comply with any request or summons, to appear and testify before any duly constituted Committee of Congress, if you are confirmed

[Witnesses answer in the affirmative.]

At this time, we will proceed to questions, and I am going to defer my questions now and go to Senator Ernst.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ERNST

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate our witnesses being here as well.

Mr. Bell, I am going to go ahead and start with you. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, Medicare and Medicaid combined to account for more than 20 percent of all Federal spending. This means that the HHS Inspector General, who oversees those programs, has a massive responsibility to ensure Federal dollars are used appropriately and consistent with congressional intent.

There's a lot of room for improvement at HHS on this, Mr. Bell, and I hope that you will be able to focus your office's resources on these programs, if confirmed. The HHS IG has 1,188 open recommendations, and that's a lot. I encourage you to take the lead, if confirmed as the HHS IG, to get those resolved.

Now, there are a few that caught my attention. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had not recovered more than \$1 billion in Medicaid overpayments identified by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) audits. Medicare could have saved up to \$128 million over five years if CMS had implemented control to address duplicate payments for services.

Mr. Bell, there are many changes overdue at HHS to lower costs and improve access to care for Iowans and all Americans. But, if confirmed, would you commit to addressing existing recommendations to reduce, and hopefully, eliminate overpayments and duplicate duplicative payments?

Mr. BELL. I do.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. That's an easy one. Mr. Bell, as HHS IG will be responsible for oversight of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), NIH conducts and support significant groundbreaking research to help keep Americans healthier, but it also conducts and supports research that has no business getting

taxpayer support. This includes studies answering critical questions such as; are pampered cats less likely to poop outside the litter box? Do pigeons gamble? Does this sour cream and onion flavored potato chip look like Elvis?

All of these studies are required to provide a public price tag for taxpayers by the Stevens Amendment, but none of them do. In fact, a 2019 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, I requested, found that none, none of HHS's operating divisions could demonstrate that they had a process to manage and administer grantees compliance with the Stevens Amendment. I am sorry, we spent taxpayer dollars on this. It might look like Elvis, but did we have to spend taxpayer dollars on this?

From your previous time at HHS, are you aware of other laws that HHS and/or those who receive grants or funding from HHS that have blatantly disregarded what you would like to highlight for this Committee?

Mr. BELL. Thank you for that question, Senator. I did see a number of grants and proposals and guidance directions during the first Trump administration that were obnoxious to congressionally passed statutes. Some are just the unfortunate largesse of a bureaucracy with a lot of other people's money to spend and the ability to, in an unaccountable way, spend that money outside the brackets of congressional law.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you. I think that we need to really pay attention. I have spent a lot of my last 11 years focusing on waste, fraud, and abuse within our Federal Government. These are a few of the egregious examples of the misuse of taxpayer dollars. We need better oversight. We need compliance with the laws that are already in existence.

My message today is I do not think anybody agrees we should be spending money on a potato chip. I just, I do not believe that. I am sorry, the litter box thing, let some private company pay for that if they are focused on kitty litter, whatever it might be. But let's not spend taxpayer dollars on garbage like this.

I appreciate that we have additional questions. I will submit those for the record.

But I really want to thank you. Let's make sure we are focused on effective ways that we can use our taxpayer dollars for the right and intended use.

Mr. BELL. Gladly.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman PAUL. Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Mr. Chair, I defer on my questions and recognize Senator Hassan.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HASSAN

Senator HASSAN. Thank you so much, Ranking Member Peters. Mr. Chair, thank you as well for this hearing. To our witnesses, congratulations on your nominations, and to your families as well.

I want to start with a question to Mr. Walk. It's a simple, straightforward question that I already asked Mr. Bell at a previous hearing, so I just want you to answer this one, Mr. Walk. If directed by the President to take action that would break the law, would you follow the law or follow the President's directive?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I appreciate that question. Regardless of who were to ask otherwise, I will faithfully abide by the United States Constitution and the laws established thereunder.

Senator HASSAN. I appreciate that. To both of you, shortly after taking office, President Trump illegally fired 17 inspectors general, including the inspectors general for the Departments of Health and Human Service, and Agriculture, the same inspectors general that you are now nominated to replace. In doing so, the President not only broke the law, but he also purposely removed the people charged with preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in our government.

To each of you, we will start with you, Mr. Walk, do you support the President's firing of the inspector general who held the position for which you are now nominated?

Mr. WALK. Senator, the President is entitled to remove inspector generals. I would just add that our former inspector general is a plaintiff in a lawsuit naming USDA as a defendant. As an employee of USDA, I would not be able to answer that.

Senator HASSAN. I am going to go to Mr. Bell for a minute, and then I want to followup with both of you. Mr. Bell, do you support the firing of your predecessor? Which, by the way, to both of you, judge has said clearly broke the plain language of the law.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Senator, for that question. I was not a part of the legal analysis for that decision made by the President, head of the Executive Branch. I do not know what justification the lawyers provided, but I support the right of the head of the Executive Branch to remove any employee.

Senator HASSAN. Let's be clear that a Federal judge looking at the plain language of the statute, which says that the President had to give Congress, I think it's 30 days' notice and a reason, and the President did not do that. The President broke the law. I would like to remind both of you that, if confirmed, you will be taking an oath to uphold the law, and you will be tasked with being a watchdog over others.

Senator Ernst just made the point that we need people to comply with the written law laws that Congress writes. You will be tasked with being a watchdog over others. Do you support the President breaking the law and illegally firing your predecessors? Yes or no, Mr. Walk?

Mr. WALK. Senator, again, that matter is in pending litigation, and I can't answer.

Senator HASSAN. Mr. Bell.

Mr. BELL. Senator, I am not a Constitutional separation of powers expert—

Senator HASSAN. Right. I am going to go on because I do not have a lot of time, and I still have another couple of questions. But let's just be very clear, there are statutes written in the law. The language is quite plain here. You can read them, and you can decide whether you are going to comply with them or not.

To each of you, will you commit to continuing any open investigations that were initiated by your predecessor or by your agency's current acting inspector general? Mr. Walk?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I cannot make the commitment right now, just because I do not know what those investigations are, but I would make those kinds of decisions on the merit.

Senator HASSAN. Mr. Bell?

Mr. BELL. Senator, I looked at the 223 open investigations on the website of Health and Human Services, and many of them looked interesting. I will commit, if confirmed, to take a close look at all of them and review them on their merits.

Senator HASSAN. You can understand how concerned we are that the President of the United States broke the terms of the statute, fired independent inspectors general, and are replacing them with two people who have partisan backgrounds, and who are not committing to either following the law or keeping the investigations that nonpartisans had started.

Mr. Bell, another question for you. When you testified before the Finance Committee, I asked you about the HHS Office of the Inspector General's ongoing investigation into for-profit methadone clinics. As I previously shared with you, the HHS Office of the Inspector General has found that for-profit methadone clinics are billing Medicare for healthcare services that patients never received.

According to a recent Inspector General report, this scheme is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, and patients who need addiction treatment are not getting the care that they were promised. I asked you this question previously, you did not respond directly, so I am going to ask you again. As HHS Inspector General, will you continue to investigate whether opioid treatment are fraudulently billing the Federal Government for care that they never provided to patients? Yes or no?

Mr. BELL. Senator, you and I discussed that in our private meeting, and I told you then, and I will tell you now, I am committed to eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse in those programs. I would be glad to sit down with you.

Senator HASSAN. So, yes or no, will you continue that investigation?

Mr. BELL. I will continue to investigate waste, fraud, and abuse. I am not familiar with the details of that investigation, but I will become familiar with them, and would be happy to sit down with you and advance that cause as appropriate.

Chairman PAUL. Senator Moody.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MOODY

Senator MOODY. ff mic.]—make sure that our moneys that need to go to people who need help and are addicted in the middle of a health crisis, that the monies are going to them and not to fraud. I appreciate that topic being brought up, and I appreciate your commitment to looking into that. So important.

Appreciate, Mr. Walk, Mr. Bell, you being here today. I see that you brought your family members. Thank you for being here to support them. These hearings are sometimes tough, and it's nice to know they have loved ones at their back. Thank you for being here and supporting them in their public service. So important.

I want to address my questions specifically to Mr. Bell. I have had some personal connection to many of the issues that you will be involved in once you are confirmed. The position that you

have—well, that both of you are undertaking the position of IG is perhaps one of the most important roles in an agency.

The trust the American people put in you to remain impartial, and dependent, apolitical over an organization's staff. It's an awesome responsibility, and I believe that you have the influence, the ability, and certainly, the opportunity to restore trust in our government. That is so important right now. I think these positions are some of the most important nominations right now in our history. Thank you for being here today.

One of the things that I am particularly concerned with is what has happened to unaccompanied alien children (UAC) during the last administration? As you know, you may have read, I was very involved in taking the last administration to task. I thought in many ways they were not only facilitating, but acting as intermediaries of trafficking organizations, putting the American government in that position when these children were smuggled over the border. At the end of the day, however they got here, whatever means, that they were smuggled across the border.

The last administration, the Biden administration, put them with sponsors, dozens of children, with the same sponsors, dumped them into unspeakable situations. In our investigation, we did a grand jury investigation in Florida, they lost track of tens of thousands of children. They were placed in situations that the grand jury said it was unspeakable. Some were sent to strip clubs, dropped off in vacant lots. They were subject to abuse, put with people they didn't even know. I could go on and on in terms of the findings of a grand jury.

Just for the American public to understand, a grand jury is not a partisan organization. It's made up of people that are brought in from the community, of all political affiliations, all walks of life. These are what they found; that the Biden administration had put children into these situations and they were just subjected to horrific abuse.

As Florida's Attorney General (AG), I fought constantly in court to stop not only the intentional destruction of our border, but what was happening to our kids as a result. I know, Mr. Bell, you have a history. You worked at DOJ in the Human Trafficking Bureau as Chief Counsel for the Select Panel on Infant Lives. Certainly, I know that you value life.

I introduced Senate Bill 1997, the Stop GAPS Act, which would require the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), and HHS to work with states, with placing children with sponsors. Because one of the things that we found was that they were not even telling our Department of Children and Families when they were bringing these kids in and dumping them off into these situations. They were clandestine flights in the middle of the night. They would not give us information. Even we tried to subpoena them for information. They refused. They would not let their people talk to us. I mean, think about that. It was almost as though they were hiding what they were trying to do.

I want to make sure not only do we address the fact that they lost track of tens of thousands of children that were placed in dangerous situation, I hope we can figure out a way to make sure this never happens again. If it does start happening, that there's some-

one that's watching for that, and can make sure that we are shoring up any safeguards that we have.

A former HHS official said that they looked into this and that person said they not only verified, but corroborated what was going on in Florida, and they found even more evidence of fraud with placement and sponsorships of unaccompanied minor children. They never did anything about it, even after they had the information.

It's my hope that we get someone in there that understands how important it is for oversight, regardless of who's in the White House, and if a President does something like that again and causes harm to our children, that someone will step in and end it. It does not take a State AG to be fighting a battle from one of our states.

Mr. Bell, I know you may not have been briefed on all of the circumstances of the case, but I do I have your commitment to review this?

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Senator. Not only do you have my commitment, but I have been in all of those ORR facilities when I was a DOJ lawyer in charge of the trafficking program. I have interviewed 250 trafficking victims. I think somebody made a decision somewhere, and that decision, let that child go to the wrong place. I believe what an IG would do is find out who was in charge of that person, how that decision was made, and take the types of steps so this never happens again.

Senator MOODY. I have your commitment to review that process, and make sure that you are holding the agency accountable to its responsibilities under the law?

Mr. BELL. Yes, you do.

Senator MOODY. Thank you so much.

Chairman PAUL. Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Bell, in your opening statement that you provided for the record, you pledge, "to support the initiatives of President Trump and Secretary Kennedy." Then, you go on to say you are going to support, "their courageous and innovative change of direction for the improved healthcare of all Americans."

It's unusual to see those kinds of quotes from an IG who is supposed to be a watchdog, supposed to hold folks accountable. Traditionally, we do not see opening statements for an IG that is saying, "I am excited to be a cheerleader for the administration. I am going to be there cheering them all, every step of the way." That's not the job of an IG.

I think you know that the idea is to hold the administrations accountable. Just as you were asked by the Senator Moody, to hold administrations accountable, you have to hold them accountable, not be a cheerleader. What did you mean by those statements? Tell me that you will be an actual watchdog, which is the job of the IG.

Mr. BELL. Thank you for the question, Senator, and thank you for the opportunity to explain what I mean by initiatives. I think the administration has several initiatives that any Congress would get behind, which is; improving the delivery of healthcare, improving the compliance with Federal statutes to make Medicare and Medicaid viable for the future by making sure the recipients are

the intended recipients by Congress, to make sure that agencies don't go astray looking at potato chips and Elvis Presley.

I think those initiatives are the good government, good delivery, waste, fraud, and abuse initiatives that both the Secretary and the President have announced. I also think the structure of the IG Statute calls for cooperation and collaboration with the agency head, calls for being a student of Congress and congressional intent. It also allows the IG to initiate investigations or management reviews on his or her own initiative. Those are the three places, the three buckets that IG initiatives can fall into.

Certainly, many of those initiatives come from the administration, and I hope to be as helpful as I can in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse.

Senator PETERS. I think we all agree those are good initiatives. Those are good initiatives for all of us to be focused on. But the job of the IG is to say, this initiative is not doing what it's intended to do. Sometimes that means calling out things that may be not flattering to an administration, but that's the job of an IG.

You talk about one of the powers under the Act is that you can initiate investigations, which is really critical that you see something that doesn't seem right, your team sees something that isn't right, you begin the investigations. A President, regardless of the party, may not be happy with that initiative because it could be embarrassing or show a major flaw in what they are trying to do.

Then, a President's going to call up an IG and say, "Hey, stop this investigation," even though you have the power, in fact, the expectation that you will be the one initiating it. President Trump calls you and says, "Stop it." Will you tell him, "No, the law pretty clearly shows that I can initiate this investigation, and I believe that it's something that the taxpayers of the United States need to know what's going on." Would you say no to President Trump?

Mr. BELL. First of all, Senator, I do not have any experience in my time in the previous administration, nor do I know anyone who served in that administration or this one, who's been asked by the President to do anything unethical or illegal. I do not believe he would do that.

Second, as you and I discussed yesterday in your office, I think an IG is supposed to, in the words of Senator Wyden, call balls and strikes without secretly wearing a jersey for the pitcher or the batter. I like that characterization, and that's what I would do, if confirmed.

Senator PETERS. Mr. Walk, as a senior advisor to the USDA, you have been intimately involved in agency operations. As Inspector General, you would be likely tasked with conducting oversight of these very issues. But given you are clearly partisan work, I do not believe we can trust that you are going to be able to do that in a free, nonpartisan way.

Will you recuse yourself from any matters on which you personally worked on at the USDA that would give us more trust if you would commit right now to recuse yourself from anything that you worked on at USDA?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I appreciate the question. Recusals are very fact-specific. What I will commit to doing is to follow all Federal laws applicable to Federal employees, all regulations. I also look to

applicable guidance such as from the Office of Government Ethics (OGE), as well as professional standards, including for accounting and independence, as well as for the legal profession.

I also intend to consult with our IG counsel. We also have a group, the Office of Compliance and Integrity, whose job is to make sure that our products are done in a way that meets professional standards. I will also work with them as well to make sure there's integrity in our work.

Senator PETERS. Let's hope that's the case. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman PAUL. Thank you both for your willingness to serve. I thought we would take a moment and let you introduce your family, if you would like. Mr. Walk?

Mr. WALK. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am grateful to be joined here by my wife, Ruth, my four daughters; Joanna, Phoebe, Hannah, and Grace.

Chairman PAUL. Wonderful. Mr. Bell?

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Senator. Senator, I am joined by my wife, Maryam Bell, a beacon of good advice, kindness, and patience. We have both worked here in Washington since 1982, and she's with me here today.

Chairman PAUL. That's why you have been married so long because you appreciate that advice, right?

Mr. BELL. That's correct.

Chairman PAUL. There have been accusations made that you may be partisan, that you may be people that are just diabolically going to do Republican things and sort out, search after Democrats.

I would like to ask you both individually; will you look at waste and fraud, and at the parameters of your job, and administer it independent of whether the targets might be Republican or Democrat appointees?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I will.

Mr. BELL. Yes, Senator, I will.

Chairman PAUL. Is there anything else that either of you would like to mention about your jobs that we have not gotten to that you would like to bring forward to the Committee? The one of the programs that I think will be under Mr. Walk's purview is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The GAO found that 12 percent of the payments from the SNAP program, about \$10 billion, were improper. Do you have any ideas, Mr. Walk, about how we would go about or how an Inspector General would go about looking at fraud in the SNAP program?

Mr. WALK. Mr. Chair, thank you for that question. As Ranking Member Peters mentioned, I did serve for four months as acting Deputy Undersecretary of USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS). And SNAP fraud was one of the issues that I was very much interested in.

I believe we should make sure that we are continuing to look at internal controls to be sure that the actions that are being taken are appropriate for the types of fraud that's happening today because we see it at all levels. From the application, to the retail stores, as well as outside folks who might be skimming. That's been a real problem. We have had a lot stolen through skimming from international gangs.

I think we want to make sure that we have the internal controls in place that we are doing more in terms of our management evaluations to be sure the States are following the guidance.

Mr. WALK. There's also, I think, room for improvements in terms of technology. I am sure you all know that right now, SNAP is selling the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card for the most case which is essentially a magnetic strip. It's well behind other payment systems that would have a chip. It's low hanging fruit, and that does make it easier and more enticing for folks to try to skim from that.

I think we do want to look at technology and how we can improve technology, and how we can use technology to identify fraud and identify the patterns so that we can go after it. I am happy to say we have an Office of Analytics and Innovation at OIG that has been doing some good work in that area. I would love to explore, we can do even more.

Finally, I think it's important to increase the consequences for fraud. I think we can do more in terms of pursuing Federal criminal prosecutions, and making sure that we are building the cases for the Department of Justice to go after those who commit fraud with taxpayer dollars.

Chairman PAUL. Senator Blumenthal.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BLUMENTHAL

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Welcome to the Committee. Welcome, to your families, and thank you for your willing to serve our country as Inspectors General of Agriculture, and Health and Human Services. You play a critical role in ensuring the integrity and effectiveness of our government.

Mr. Walk, we were talking or you were talking to the chairman about the SNAP program, and we understand or we have heard that the Secretary of Agriculture has said that there has to be re-application on the part of all current SNAP recipients now. Is that your understanding?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I have only read that in the news in the same way. I have not had any conversations with the Secretary.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But you are a senior advisor to her.

Mr. WALK. That's right.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Right. You have not heard anything about it?

Mr. WALK. I, generally, would say I know what has been reported, and I understand that to be accurate.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. There is no legal requirement that all of the current SNAP beneficiaries reapply as though they had not been receiving SNAP benefits, is there?

Mr. WALK. Senator, my understanding is that there's a requirement for recertification, but in terms of retaking folks off unless they reapply, I don't know that there's a requirement for that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. There is none, correct?

Mr. WALK. Not that I am aware of.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. OK. The recertification is different from the application process, correct?

Mr. WALK. It is.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Recertification is done periodically every six months, depending on what the State decides is appropriate?

Mr. WALK. Yes.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Will you commit that you will make sure that all of the 42 million current SNAP recipients and beneficiaries receive these benefits, if they are entitled to do so under current law, and that the approval process is done expeditiously and timely so that they get those benefits as they need them to put food on the table?

Mr. WALK. Senator, thank you for the question. As I said, I did spend four months at FNCS. One of the initiatives I took on in that short time was to send to the Governors a letter that we expected timeliness in terms of the 30-day, 7-day period of completing the approval process for the applications. That is an important issue to me, even on that side. Of course, as an IG, my role would not be to be in the policy role, but as IG, I would have exercise—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If there are delays, it would be your responsibility to assure that the approvals are done in a timely and important way because people depend on the SNAP benefits, literally, to feed their children. Correct?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I agree that the IG should continue to practice effective oversight over the SNAP application process.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If I come to you as a Member of the Senate, and I say the information available to me is that there are delays and bureaucratic hangups, you would look into it, correct?

Mr. WALK. Senator, that's correct. IG Act says I need to keep Congress fully and currently informed.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I am going to hold you to that commitment.

Let me ask you about foodborne illness. There was an incident involving Boar's Head contamination with listeria that caused 60 people to be hospitalized, and 10 tragically to lose their lives. Those deaths never should have happened.

At the time, I asked the then Inspector General, Phyllis Fong, to investigate the agency's handling of repeated sanitary violation that were founded Boar's Head plants. As far as I know, the investigation is still ongoing. Can you confirm that fact?

Mr. WALK. Senator, I do not know, but I can take a look at that and get back to your staff.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If you could, I would appreciate it. If it is ongoing, will you commit to ensure that the Office of Inspector General will continue to independently investigate this incident and hold Boar's head accountable for its role in the outbreak?

Mr. WALK. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me ask you, Mr. Bell. What assurance can you give us on this Committee that you will be independent? I know that you have been asked about this issue before, that you will be independent of the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Services, in light of your statements and your political involvement on some of the issues that come before the department.

Mr. BELL. Senator, thank you for that question. Senator, in graduate school, I read Aristotle's Rhetoric, and I know the difference

between political rhetoric and the type of evidence that a Federal prosecutor accumulates for litigation.

All of my work product that is rhetorical or advocacy-oriented, has been in political campaigns. All of my work product, either in congressional oversight or while at DOJ, has followed prosecutorial standards' high quality of evidence, corroborated evidence, documented evidence. My record speaks for itself.

Just because a product offended some interest to some group, does not mean it did not follow the highest standards of investigation. I do not believe, on the investigative side, I have a single partisan product on my record.

Chairman PAUL. Senator time is expired. Senator Hawley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HAWLEY

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Congratulations to the nominees. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Walk, let me just start with you. Give us a sense, if you would, give me a sense of your priorities, if confirmed, what you think are the major efforts, lines of effort that you would pursue. Just give me a sense of what you think the lay of the land is.

Mr. WALK. Senator, thank you. The top, I would say, three priorities would be public health and safety, integrity of our programs, and also, the national security programs.

Senator HAWLEY. On the national security programs, what do you have in mind, in particular?

Mr. WALK. Senator, you may know that the Secretary has released a farm security plan that highlights kind of the linkage between homeland security and agriculture. We have seen, for example foreign investments in the United States related to agriculture, both in foreign purchases as well as companies where we are getting data, it seems shipped to export it to foreign adversaries. I think we need, as we take actions on those kinds of things, for the IG to make sure that it's done in an appropriate way.

Other issues that I think deserves a look is research security. I am sure, as you may know, in the last six months there's been at least two breaches at the University of Michigan involving biological materials that have a link to agriculture. One is Fusarium, which the FBI has characterized as an agroterrorism weapon, and the other is a ringworm, which can cause pretty serious diseases to livestock. Both were at the hands of foreign adversaries; I will just say Chinese nationals.

There seems to be a pattern there. In other schools as well, where we need to be looking closer at research security, particularly when it comes from USDA. Is that money staying within the United States, or is it somehow supporting foreign adversaries?

There's also, I think, an interest in terms of making sure that we increase our independence so that we are not dependent on foreign nations for key agricultural inputs such as fertilizer. I would view all of that within the national security rubric.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Mr. Bell, let me just switch to you, if I could. I want to talk to you for just a second about rural hospitals, particularly cybersecurity as it relates to rural hospitals. About 40 percent of the hospitals in my State are rural. Frequently, these hospitals do not have the budget to stand up a cy-

bersecurity effort, and as a consequence, they are frequently the targets of cybersecurity attacks.

That's one of the reasons that Senator Hassan and I have introduced a bill called the Rural Hospital Cybersecurity Enhancement Act, which would direct HHS to create a comprehensive workforce strategy to train and develop cybersecurity personnel and professionals to help rural hospitals in particular.

Now, I ask you this because if this legislation were to pass, the Office of Inspector General would be tasked with auditing how HHS develops and rolls out the cybersecurity strategy, including verifying that the training goes to the neediest hospitals, holding grantees accountable for improvements in defenses.

If you were confirmed, can you commit to me that you would prioritize oversight of legislation like the Rural Hospital Cybersecurity Enhancement as part of HHS's broader rural hospital or rural health efforts?

Mr. BELL. Senator Hawley, thank you for the question. I concur. That's a serious problem. Having spent four years the National Counterterrorism Center, I am aware of the dangers of cybersecurity, and I will commit to sit down with you and figure out how to implement that, if confirmed, and if passed. But I believe that would be a top priority even if the legislation doesn't pass.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Give me a sense of, in just our few remaining seconds here, what you see as the other top priorities and lines of effort that, should you be confirmed.

Mr. BELL. I think 80 percent of the IG staff is dedicated to Medicare and Medicaid fraud. There's a lot of modernization that needs to take place. One of the first things I would look at is what type of payment tracker software is the office using in order to look across data bases to find fraud? I will bring to bear my background at the Department of Justice in stopping criminal conduct.

It's important to just to rack up more cases or more money, but to change behavior. Behavior of people doing the fraud needs to be changed. I would design advice and initiatives to change the behavior of people committing fraud so they don't decide not to do so.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman PAUL. Thank you to the nominees for your time today and your commitment to work with the Committee. The nominees have filed responses to biographical and financial questionnaires¹ and had their financial statements reviewed by the Office of Government Ethics.² Without objection, this information will be made part of the hearing record with the exception of the nominees' financial data, which are on file with the committee.

Due to the quick turnaround between this hearing and the mark-up tomorrow, the hearing record will remain open until 5 p.m. today, November 19th.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:46 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

¹ The information for Mr. Walk appears in the Appendix on page 19.

² The information for Mr. Bell appears in the Appendix on page 53.

A P P E N D I X

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Gary Peters Nov. 19 Nominations Hearing

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to our nominees and congratulations on your nominations. Good to see that you have your family with you as well.

It is important for this Committee to hear from and question nominees at public hearings, and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to do that today.

However, I am disappointed that we have had almost no opportunity to conduct public oversight of this Administration and its top officials after they have been confirmed.

Mr. Chairman, since the beginning of this year, you have held just one hearing where an Administration official testified, and that was more than six months ago.

Just to put into perspective, when I was Chairman during the Biden administration we had 10 hearings with administration officials at this point in that first year. One versus ten. The year is not over, we can catch up and get to the 10, but that is a pretty slim agenda. You've only held one legislative markup this year.

This Committee has wide-ranging legislative and oversight responsibilities. There are several bills that Members on both sides of the aisle want to debate and advance, and there are numerous oversight issues Administration officials need to answer for.

Chairman Paul – I hope you will call on the leaders of DHS, the FBI, and the National Counterterrorism Center to testify before this Committee before the end of the year. This Committee's "annual threats" hearing provides a critical opportunity for the American people to hear from our national security leaders about wide-ranging threats facing our nation.

Now turning to our nominees.

This year, the Administration has launched an unprecedented attack on the independence of Inspectors General. These are nonpartisan watchdogs responsible for combatting waste, fraud, and abuse across government.

Since taking office, President Trump has fired 19 Inspectors General and not once did he provide the legally required notification or explanation to Congress.

President Trump has also attacked acting IGs. Just two weeks ago, he fired the acting IG for the Federal Housing Finance Agency in an apparent act of retaliation.

As the Administration continues to undermine independent oversight bodies, it is more important now than ever that we have qualified, non-partisan individuals to serve in these roles.

Thomas March Bell has been nominated to serve as the IG of the Department of Health and Human Services. If confirmed, Mr. Bell will be tasked with overseeing one of the largest Departments, including a 2.3 trillion-dollar budget and over 100 programs.

Given Mr. Bell's highly partisan track record, I am concerned he will instead use the IG's office to pursue political aims, including attacking women's reproductive rights, for example.

What does his record show?

Mr. Bell led a partisan investigation into the alleged sale of fetal tissue for profit, a claim that has already been thoroughly investigated and thoroughly debunked.

He served as the Chief of Staff of the Office of Civil Rights at HHS in the first Trump Administration where he limited women's access to reproductive care.

Mr. Bell is anything but a nonpartisan. Currently, he is investigating a Democratic fundraising platform, even though its Republican counterpart faces the exact same issues, he's only focusing on the Democratic platform. He plays politics with every oversight role he has had.

But Mr. Bell is not unique. I am also concerned about the independence of President Trump's nominee for IG to the Department of Agriculture.

John Walk is currently serving as Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture and as the acting Director of the Office of Tribal Relations. He also served as the acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services.

How can we trust that the Secretary's right-hand man will provide independent oversight of the very policies and the very programs that he has implemented?

I think the answer is clear: we can't.

I am concerned that instead of acting impartially, Mr. Walk will cater to the Administration.

Still, I thank the nominees for being here today and look forward to asking and hearing from you questions that are posed.

John Walk
Opening Statement for The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
November 19, 2025

Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs:

My name is John Walk. Thank you for the opportunity to address my nomination for Inspector General of the United States Department of Agriculture. I am joined by my wife, Ruth, and our four daughters, Grace, Hannah, Joanna, and Phoebe. I am grateful they are at my side. With humility, I express my deepest thanks to President Trump for his nomination to this very important role.

Transparency that enables accountability is fundamental to our democratic system of government and necessary to the preservation of liberty. Like at other federal departments, the American People must have the means to acquire knowledge about the work of USDA as part of their exercise of self-government.

Inspector Generals perform a crucial function to promote transparency by informing the public of waste, fraud, and abuse in the administration of federal programs that is essential for the American People to hold government accountable for its decisions and conduct. At USDA, the Department is entrusted with stewarding more than \$200 billion of taxpayer funds annually and manages more than 300 programs in support of farmers, ranchers, and the American public. USDA authorities include farm programs, rural development, agriculture research, food safety, nutrition, trade promotion, animal and plant health, forest management, animal welfare, disaster response, federal benefits programs including SNAP and WIC, and other important areas. It is critical for USDA's OIG to shine a bright light on the many activities of the Department and its management of resources so that USDA carries out its mission effectively, efficiently, and with due accountability to the American people.

If confirmed, I will assume the responsibilities of Inspector General with the benefit of nearly 25 years of federal experience from entry level roles to senior leadership positions. My federal service began as a records clerk at the Department of Justice while I was still in high school. After graduating from college I served as a staffer in the House of Representatives for more than five years. Following law school in 2008, I entered the career civil service through the Department of Homeland Security's Honors Attorney Program. During my eight years at DHS I provided legal counsel to ensure the Department exercised its authorities in compliance with all legal requirements to secure our homeland while maintaining the constitutional rights of Americans. At DHS, I was also involved in litigating numerous federal lawsuits alleging claims for legal violations and investigated many allegations against the agency and its employees.

Immediately after DHS, I was honored to serve President Donald J. Trump for nearly four years during his first term as Associate Counsel at the White House Counsel's

Office. After my service at the White House, I began my tenure as USDA's Judicial Officer – a job I still hold in addition to Senior Advisor to the Secretary. As Judicial Officer I am the Department's appellate level administrative judge deciding formal agency adjudication enforcing various USDA legal authorities. As such, for nearly five years I have served as USDA's deciding official in administrative litigation under the delegation of three Senate confirmed Secretaries of Agriculture of both political parties. In this role, I exercise objective and independent judgment to draw factual and legal conclusions based on the evidence. It is a role that requires impartiality, fairness, and fidelity to the law and facts as they are found without regard to politics.

If confirmed, I will approach the role of Inspector General with the same objectivity and independent mindedness to expose waste, fraud, and abuse as it is found. I will draw on my almost quarter century of service in the federal government to carry out the oversight functions of this important role.

In the Bible, Jesus said, "nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light." That is exactly as it should be in government. Given the opportunity to serve as IG, I will work tirelessly to bring the work of the USDA into the light – keeping USDA leadership, Congress, and ultimately the American People, fully informed of deficiencies and problems in the Department's administration of its programs to strengthen transparency and public accountability.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to answering any questions.

REDACTED

**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, & FORESTRY
 Questions for Executive Nominees
 119th Congress: Part I**

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
Inspector General, United States Department of Agriculture	July 16, 2025

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
John		Walk	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 1400 Independence Ave SW		
<u>City:</u> Fairfax	<u>State:</u> VA	<u>Zip:</u> 22032	<u>City:</u> Washington	<u>State:</u> DC	<u>Zip:</u> 20250

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<small>Check if Maiden Name.</small>	<u>Name Used From (Year)</u> (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To (Month/Year)</u> (Check box if estimate)
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1975	Seattle, Washington

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Separated <input type="checkbox"/>	Annulled <input type="checkbox"/>	Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Spouse's Name</i> (current spouse only)			
<u>Spouse's First Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Middle Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Last Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Suffix</u>
Ruth	Sessions	Walk	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used</i> (current spouse only)						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<small>Check if Maiden Name.</small>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Ruth	Blackshear	Sessions		X	1976 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	2001 Est X
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
Antonin Scalia Law School George Mason University	Law School	8/2006 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	5/2008 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	Juris Doctor	5/17/2008
Columbus School of Law Catholic University of America	Law School	8/2005 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	8/2006 Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	None	
Occidental College	College	8/1994 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	5/1997 Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	BA	5/1997
American University	University (Washington Semester Program while at Occidental College)	1/1995 Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5/1995 Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/>	None	

Biola University	University	8/1993	12/1993	None	
Bellevue Community College	Community College	1/1994	6/1994	None	
South Seattle Community College	Community College (received college credit while in High School)	9/1992 Est. X	12/1992 Est. X	None	

3. Employment

(A) In reverse chronological order, list all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

Type of Employment (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPHS Commissioned Corps, Other Federal employment, State Government (Non-Federal Employment), Self-employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non-Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other	Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station	Most Recent Position Title/Rank	Location (City and State only)	Date Employment Began (month/year) (check box if estimate)	Date Employment Ended (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Federal Government	United States Department of Agriculture	Acting Director of the Office of Tribal Relations	Washington, D.C.	9/2/2025 Est. X	Est. Present X
Federal Government	United States Department of Agriculture	Senior Advisor to the Secretary (Detailed) Designation included for public facing purposes.	Washington, D.C.	6/2025 Est. <input type="checkbox"/>	Est. Present <input type="checkbox"/> X
Federal Government	United States Department of Agriculture	Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services	Washington, DC	2/2025	6/2025

Federal Government	United States Department of Agriculture	Judicial Officer	Washington, DC	12/2020		Est Present X
Federal Government	The White House/White House Counsel's Office	Associate Counsel to the President	Washington, DC	1/2017	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	12/2020 Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Government	Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration	Attorney Advisor	Arlington, VA	6/2010	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	1/2017 Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Government	Department of Homeland Security, Office of General Counsel	Attorney Advisor	Washington, DC	9/2008	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	6/2010 Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Government	United States Court of Federal Claims	Judicial Extern	Washington, DC	Approximately 5/2007		Approximately 7/2007
Law Firm	Kilpatrick Stockton, LLP	Senior Government Relations Advisor	Washington, DC	1/2004	Est <input type="checkbox"/>	3/2007 Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Government Relations Firm	Collins and Company	Senior Associate	Arlington, VA	4/2003		1/2004
Federal Government	United States House of Representatives (Congressman Xavier Becerra 5/1998 – 4/2003), Congressman Tony Hall (2/1998-5/1998); Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (5/1997-2/1998)	Senior Legislative Assistant	Washington, DC	5/1997		4/2003
College	Occidental College	No formal title – assistant in politics department	Los Angeles, CA	Approximately 9/1996		Approximately 5/1997
Federal Government	United States House of Representatives Office of Congressman Xavier Becerra	Intern	Los Angeles, CA	Approximately 9/1996		Approximately 5/1997

Private Company	Dean Witter	No formal title – assisted brokers	Glendale, CA	Approximately 1/1996	Approximately 5/1996
International Government Organization	United Nations	Intern	New York NY	Approximately 8/1995	Approximately 12/1995
University	American University Food Services	No formal title – cafeteria worker	Washington, DC	Approximately 5/1995	Approximately 8/1995
Private Company	Do not recall – opinion survey	No formal title – called with opinion surveys	Washington, DC	Approximately 5/1995	Approximately 5/1995
Non-Profit	Families USA Foundation	Intern	Washington, DC	Approximately 5/1995	Approximately 8/1995
Federal Government	United States House of Representatives Office of Congressman Xavier Becerra	Intern	Washington, DC	Approximately 1/1995	Approximately 5/1995
University	Biola University	No formal title – data entry	La Mirada, CA	Approximately 9/1993	Approximately 12/1993

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Government Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est Present <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

(C) List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other for profit or nonprofit organization that is not otherwise listed in response to question 3(A).

<u>Name of Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
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Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association	Vice President	9/1999	Est X	12/2000	Est X	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
			Est <input type="checkbox"/>		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>
			Est <input type="checkbox"/>		Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <input type="checkbox"/>

(D) Please submit a copy of your resume with this questionnaire.

4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last 10 years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, parent-teacher associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam’s Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate.)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
The Federalist Society	Approximately 12/2017 to Present	Member
The Heritage Foundation	Approximately 1/2023 through 12/2023	Member
Bar of the District of Columbia	6/2010 to present	Member
Bar of the State of Maryland	12/2008 to present	Member

6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?

Yes No (If yes, please complete the chart below)

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered, including volunteer services, to a political party or election committee during the last 10 years that you have not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>
Donald Trump Presidential Election Campaign, 2016	Election Day Operations	Fielded calls from voters.	2016
Trump Pence Presidential Transition Team	Volunteer on the DHS transition team	Provided technical assistance on matters related to homeland security	2016-2017

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
John Bash for Attorney General (Texas)	\$312.30	2025

7. Publications and Speeches

(A) List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet. Include a link to each publication when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the publication via email if available. Please list all required publications even if no copy of the publication is available to provide.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publis her</u>	<u>Date(s) of Publicat ion</u>
<p>From 12/2020 to present I served as USDA's Judicial Officer. Those decisions published by USDA are available at https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-hearings-and-appeals/office-judicial-officer/ojo-decisions (see also Agriculture Decisions publication by USDA, available at https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-hearings-and-appeals/office-administrative-law-judges/services/agriculture-decisions-publication#:~:text=Agriculture%20Decisions%20is%20an%20official,regulatory%20programs%20are%20also%20included. Some Judicial Officer decisions are also on the University of Arkansas website, available at https://nationalaglawcenter.org/aglaw-reporter/usdadecisions/. Some decisions issued by me are available from commercial databases such as Westlaw and can be searched by my name.</p> <p>Information about reparation cases, including sample cases are available at https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/paca/recent-decisions.</p>		
<p>SNAP Alien Sponsors Letter, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/alien-sponsors-letter</p>		March 18, 2025
<p>SNAP Application Processing Timeliness Letter to Governors, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/qc/timeliness/letter</p>		April 1, 2025
<p>SNAP Guidance on Termination of CHNV Parole Programs, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/admin/guidance-termination-chnv-parole-programs</p>		April 3, 2025
<p>The Secretary's Authority on Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Waivers, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/work-requirements/policies/secretary-authority</p>		April 17, 2025
<p>SNAP Further Guidance on Termination of CHNV Parole Programs, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/admin/further-guidance-termination-chnv-parole-programs</p>		April 22, 2025
<p>Improving Eligibility Verification to Support Program Integrity, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/admin/improving-eligibility-verification</p>		April 24, 2025
<p>Revised Guidance on Termination of Parole for Certain Aliens and Immediate Family Members, https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/admin/revised-guidance-termination-parole</p>		June 13, 2025

(B) List any formal speeches or presentations you have delivered during the last 10 years relevant to the position to which you have been nominated, and all speeches/presentations you have delivered related to any topic for the last five years. Include any testimony to Congress or any other legislative or administrative body. Include a link to each speech when possible. If a link is not available, provide a digital copy of the publication via email if available. Please list all known required speeches even if no copy is available to provide.

<u>Title/Topic</u>	<u>Place/Audience</u>	<u>Date(s) of Speech</u>

8. Lobbying

In the past 10 years, have you registered as a lobbyist? If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State).

No.

9. Digital Platforms

Please list all digital platforms (including social media and other digital content sites) on which you currently operate, or have formerly operated, an account, regardless of whether the account was held in your name or an alias. Include the full “alias” or “handle”, including a link to each account if possible. Indicate whether the account is active, deleted, or dormant.

Linked-in -- www.linkedin.com/in/john-walk-6589b91bb

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, & FORESTRY
Questions for Executive Nominees
119th Congress: Part II

9. Criminal History

(A) Since (and including) your 18th birthday, has any of the following happened?

1. Have you been issued a summons, citation, or ticket to appear in court in a criminal proceeding against you? (Exclude citations involving traffic infractions where the fine was less than \$300 and did not include alcohol or drugs.) Yes No
2. Have you been arrested by any police officer, sheriff, marshal or any other type of law enforcement official? Yes No
3. Have you been charged, convicted, or sentenced of a crime in any court? Yes No
4. Have you been or are you currently on probation or parole? Yes No
5. Are you currently on trial or awaiting a trial on criminal charges? Yes No
6. To your knowledge, have you ever been the subject or target of a federal, state or local criminal investigation? Yes No

(B) If the answer to any of the questions above is yes, please answer the questions below for each criminal event (citation, arrest, investigation, etc.). If the event was an investigation, where the question below asks for information about the offense, please offer information about the offense under investigation (if known).

1. Date of offense:
 - a. Is this an estimate? Yes No
2. Description of the specific nature of the offense:
3. Did the offense involve any of the following?
 - a. Domestic violence or a crime of violence (such as battery or assault) against your child, dependent, cohabitant, spouse, former spouse, or someone with whom you share a child in common: Yes No
 - b. Firearms or explosives: Yes No
 - c. Alcohol or drugs: Yes No
4. Location where the offense occurred (city, county, state, zip code, country):
5. Were you arrested, summoned, cited or did you receive a ticket to appear as a result of this offense by any police officer, sheriff, marshal or any other type of law enforcement official: Yes No:
 - a. Name of the law enforcement agency that arrested/cited/summoned you:
 - b. Location of the law enforcement agency (city, county, state, zip code, country):

6. As a result of this offense were you charged, convicted, currently awaiting trial, and/or ordered to appear in court in a criminal proceeding against you: Yes No:
- a. If yes, provide the name of the court and the location of the court (city, county, state, zip code, country):
 - b. If yes, provide all the charges brought against you for this offense, and the outcome of each charged offense (such as found guilty, found not-guilty, charge dropped or "nolle pros," etc). If you were found guilty of or pleaded guilty to a lesser offense, list separately both the original charge and the lesser offense:
 - c. If no, provide explanation:
7. Were you sentenced as a result of this offense: Yes No
Provide a description of the sentence:
8. Were you sentenced to imprisonment for a term exceeding one year: Yes No
9. Were you incarcerated as a result of that sentence for not less than one year: Yes No
10. If the conviction resulted in imprisonment, provide the dates that you actually were incarcerated:
11. If conviction resulted in probation or parole, provide the dates of probation or parole:
12. Are you currently on trial, awaiting a trial, or awaiting sentencing on criminal charges for this offense:
 Yes No
13. Provide explanation:

10. Civil Litigation and Administrative or Legislative Proceedings

(A) Since (and including) your 18th birthday, have you been a party to any public record civil court action or administrative or legislative proceeding of any kind that resulted in (1) a finding of wrongdoing against you, or (2) a settlement agreement for you, or some other person or entity, to make a payment to settle allegations against you, or for you to take, or refrain from taking, some action. Do NOT include small claims proceedings.

Yes No. If yes, please complete the chart below.

<u>Date Claim/Suit Was Filed or Legislative Proceedings Began</u>	<u>Court Name</u>	<u>Name(s) of Principal Parties Involved in Action/Proceeding</u>	<u>Nature of Action/Proceeding</u>	<u>Results of Action/Proceeding</u>

(B) In addition to those listed above, have you or any business of which you were an officer, director or owner ever been involved as a party of interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation while you were associated with the business that resulted in (1) a finding of wrongdoing or (2) a settlement agreement? Please include monetary and non-monetary agreements. Do NOT include small claims proceedings. Please identify and provide details for any such proceedings or civil litigation that involve actions taken or omitted by you, or alleged to have been taken or omitted by you, while serving in your official capacity.

Yes No. If yes, please complete the chart below as required.

<u>Date Claim/Suit Was Filed or Legislative Proceedings Began</u>	<u>Court Name</u>	<u>Name(s) of Principal Parties Involved in Action/Proceeding</u>	<u>Nature of Action/Proceeding</u>	<u>Results of Action/Proceeding</u>

11. Breach of Professional Ethics

(A) Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by, or been the subject of a complaint to, any court, administrative agency, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? Exclude cases and proceedings already listed.

Yes No. If yes, please complete the chart below.

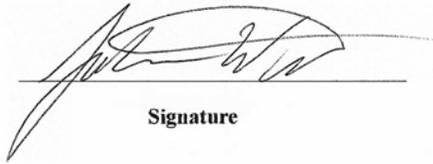
<u>Name of Agency/Association/Committee/Group</u>	<u>Date Citation/Disciplinary Action/Complaint Issued/Initiated</u>	<u>Describe Citation/Disciplinary Action/Complaint</u>	<u>Results of Disciplinary Action/Complaint</u>

9. Tax Compliance

REDACTED

REDACTED

I, John Walk, certify that the information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand any false statements are strictly prohibited and subject to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. § 1001.


Signature

8/2/2025
Date

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION & FORESTRY
119TH CONGRESS

Supplemental Questions to Nominee Questionnaire

1. Describe fully all matters (including all employers, clients, organizations, or interests) upon which you have provided representation over the past five years before—
 - a. the Department or Agency to which you have been nominated; and
NONE
 - b. the Congress involving matters related to the Department or Agency to which you have been nominated.
NONE
2. Have you, or any partnership or closely held corporation or other closely held entity in which you have an interest, ever owned or operated any type of business or entity, including, but not limited to, the following: a farm or ranch, a financial services business, a banking services or insurance business, or a consulting services business? (If yes, please provide a brief description including location, size, type of operation and ownership structure for any such entity owned or operated during the last ten years.)
NO
3. If you, or any partnership or closely held corporation or other closely held entity in which you have an interest, owned or operated any type of business as described above in Question 2, during the last seven years that employs or has employed workers—
 - a. Have all required tax filings for such workers been made and are taxes paid and current to date?
N/A
 - b. If relevant, have all requisite immigration forms been completed and filed for such workers?
N/A
 - c. Have all applicable laws and regulations been followed with respect to the safety and wellbeing of such workers?
N/A
4. Have you, or any partnership or closely held corporation or other closely held entity in which you have an interest, ever participated in federal commodity income and price support, crop insurance, disaster, conservation, related programs or other programs affiliated with the agency to which you have been nominated? (If yes, please provide full details including descriptions and amounts of payments and/or loans received or forfeited relating to each commodity, crop, farm, and ranch or description of any benefits received from the program you were involved with during the past ten years.)
NO
5. Have you, or any partnership or closely held corporation or other closely held entity in which you have an interest, ever received a loan or cosigned a note involving a loan from, or guaranteed by, any department or agency of the federal government (other than a student loan)? (If yes, please provide the current status and details of such loan or loans,

whether the indebtedness has been fully repaid, and all details of such loan activity during the past ten years.)

NO

6. Have you, or any partnership or closely held corporation or other closely held entity in which you have an interest, declared bankruptcy during the last ten years?

NO

7. If you have ever been discharged from military service, please provide a brief description including the branch of service, the type and date of discharge, and the reason the discharge was received.

N/A

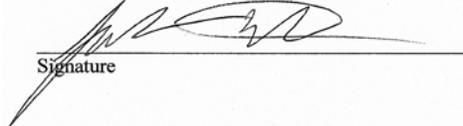
8. Please inform the Committee of any information that might be used against you to cause embarrassment to you, the Committee, the United States Senate, the Department or Agency to which you have been appointed, or the President of the United States.

NONE

9. Please inform the Committee of any personal or professional relationship or association that could create the appearance of a conflict of interest for the position to which you have been nominated.

NONE

I, John Walk, certify that the information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand any false statements are strictly prohibited and subject to prosecution under 18 U.S.C. § 1001.


Signature

8/2/2025
Date

REDACTED

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



September 4, 2025

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, I enclose a copy of the financial disclosure report filed by John Walk, who has been nominated by President Trump for the position of Inspector General, Department of Agriculture.

We have reviewed the report and have obtained advice from the agency concerning any possible conflict in light of its functions and the nominee's proposed duties. Also enclosed is an ethics agreement outlining the actions that the nominee will undertake to avoid conflicts of interest. Unless a date for compliance is indicated in the ethics agreement, the nominee must fully comply within three months of confirmation with any action specified in the ethics agreement.

Based thereon, we believe that this nominee is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest.

Sincerely,

Deborah Bortot
Chief, Presidential Nominations Branch

Enclosures **REDACTED**



September 2, 2025

Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 347-W
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bender:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture. It is my responsibility to understand and comply with commitments outlined in this agreement.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL COMMITMENTS

As required by the criminal conflicts of interest law at 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the particular matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me:

- Any spouse or minor child of mine;
- Any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner;
- Any organization in which I serve as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee, even if uncompensated; and
- Any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict, such as recusal from the particular matter or divestiture of an asset.

If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the regulatory exemption for diversified mutual funds and unit investment trusts at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will receive a live ethics briefing from a member of the ethics office after my confirmation but not later than 15 days after my appointment pursuant to the ethics program regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will submit my

Page 2 of 2

Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance which documents my compliance with this ethics agreement.

I will not modify this ethics agreement without your approval and the approval of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) pursuant to the ethics agreement requirements contained in the financial disclosure regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2634.803(a)(4).

SECTION 2 – PUBLIC POSTING

I have been advised that this ethics agreement and the Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance will be posted publicly, consistent with the public information law at 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

John Walk

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to John Walk
Senator Gary C. Peters**

**Nomination of John Walk to be Inspector General, Department of Agriculture
Thursday, November 20, 2025**

Inspector General Independence

1. Do you believe that President Trump violated the *Inspector General Act* when he fired IGs in January 2025 without the statutorily required congressional notification? Why or why not?

That is a central issue in pending litigation filed by USDA's former Inspector General against USDA in *Storch v. Hegseth*, 1:25-cv-00415 (D. D.C.). As a current employee of USDA it would not be appropriate for me to discuss an issue in litigation against the agency subject to active litigation. The government's argument is outline in its brief available on the Court's docket.

2. What factors will you use to guide your decision-making when deciding whether to launch a formal investigation of a matter within the Department? To what extent will congressional requests for investigation be prioritized?

I would consider the totality of circumstances. Congressional requests should be prioritized in light of the IG Act requirement that Congress be kept "currently and fully informed."

3. Once an investigation has concluded and recommendations for improvement within the Department have been made, what is your view of the role of the OIG in following up to ensure completion of recommendations? How will you ensure recommendations are implemented to the greatest extent possible?

I believe OIG should aggressively follow up on recommendations. Although, OIG lacks authority to require adoption of recommendations, maintaining appropriate communication with USDA leadership and developing fair and quality work product that clearly identifies deficiencies and demonstrates how recommendations will result in improvements and savings are both important ways to encourage adoption.

4. Were any conditions, expressed or implied, attached to your nomination? If so, please explain.

No

5. Have you made any commitments with respect to the policies and principles you will attempt to implement as IG? If so, what are they, and to whom were the commitments made?

No

6. Do you believe that the President can ever disregard a court order? If so, under what circumstances? Please explain.

It is not appropriate for an OIG nominee to offer a legal conclusion on the President's lawful exercise of authority under the Constitution. The OIG's office will appropriately follow all federal court orders.

7. If the President or anyone acting at the direction of the President or on his behalf asks you to violate the law, will you decline to do so?

Regardless of who asks me to do otherwise, I will faithfully abide by the United States Constitution and the laws established thereunder.

8. Do you seek out dissenting views and encourage constructive critical dialogue with subordinates? Please provide examples of times in your career when you have done so.

Yes. In addressing an issue involving a stakeholder I worked with a team of staff with different perspectives and talents to identify a solution forward.

9. What would you do if the President or anyone acting at the direction of the President directed you to initiate or stop an investigation?

I would act with utmost professionalism.

10. What steps would you take to ensure that OIG reports are not inappropriately weakened or interfered with by political appointees?

I would follow all laws and apply professional standards as applicable.

11. If you believed USDA employees or senior officials were not fully cooperating with an OIG inquiry or were attempting to interfere with an OIG inquiry, what steps would you take?

I would utilize all appropriate tools made available to OIG under the law and comply with all legal requirements including those contained in the IG Act.

12. If confirmed, do you commit to recuse yourself from any matters on which you personally worked at USDA?

As I conveyed during the hearing, determining whether to recuse from a particular matter is fact specific. If confirmed, I commit to following all federal laws and regulations applicable to federal employees, and consider all applicable guidance and professional standards, and I will

consult with OIG counsel and the Office of Compliance and Integrity to safeguard the integrity of OIG work.

13. You have been quoted making partisan statements in USDA materials, including your statement that “The Biden Administration was not holding states accountable, but that ends now” in regard to states' compliance with federal standards for administration of SNAP. What concrete steps will you take, if confirmed, to assure Congress that you will not approach oversight in a partisan matter?

I commit to following all laws, regulations, and applicable professional standards.

14. Will you commit to recuse yourself from any matters concerning officials with whom you worked closely at USDA? Please name these officials.

I commit to following all federal laws, including federal regulations, regarding conflicts of interest applicable to federal employees and apply applicable professional standards safeguarding against conflicts of interests as appropriate. I will also seek advice of OIG counsel and work with the Office of Compliance and Integrity when necessary.

Whistleblowers

15. In your view, what value do whistleblowers provide to the federal government and U.S. taxpayers?

Tremendous value and essential for effective oversight.

16. Protecting whistleblowers and their confidentiality is of the utmost importance to this Committee.
 - a. Please describe any previous experience with handling whistleblower complaints. What steps did you take to ensure those individuals did not face retaliation and that their claims were thoroughly investigated?

As agency counsel, I have worked on numerous federal court cases involving retaliation in the context of Title VII. If confirmed, I commit to protecting whistleblowers against all forms of retaliation pursuant to all available legal authorities.

- b. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that whistleblower complaints are handled appropriately within USDA?

If confirmed, I will work with the OIG whistleblower coordinator to assess the current process in place and work with the coordinator to make any necessary improvements.

Elections

16. Who won the 2020 Presidential election?

Joseph R. Biden was certified the winner as a matter of law.

17. Do you believe the 2020 election was free and fair?

USDA does not administer state election systems, and it would not fall to USDA's OIG to investigate matters of election integrity.

18. Who won the 2024 Presidential election?

Donald J. Trump was the certified the winner as a matter of law.

19. Do you believe that the 2024 election was free and fair?

USDA does not administer state election systems, and it would not fall to USDA's OIG to investigate matters of election integrity.

Privacy and data sharing

20. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that USDA OIG is using and sharing data in ways that do not violate individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, including by following relevant law and policy?

If confirmed, I would take all actions the OIG is legally authorized to take, as merited by the particular facts of the use or sharing.

21. If confirmed, do you commit to preserving existing rules and policies governing how the OIG may share data with USDA?

Yes.

22. As part of the confirmation process, you told the Committee that you facilitated DOGE access to SNAP and other data systems at USDA. Can you clarify which systems were accessed and what DOGE's work with these systems entailed?

If confirmed, regardless if I worked with DOGE and what any such work entailed, I commit to following all federal laws, including federal regulations, regarding conflicts of interest applicable to federal employees and apply applicable professional standards safeguarding against conflicts of interests as appropriate. I will also seek advice of OIG counsel and work with the Office of Compliance and Integrity when necessary.

a. In addition to Conor Fennessy, what other individuals associated with DOGE did you work with?

If confirmed, regardless of who I worked with, I commit to following all federal laws, including federal regulations, regarding conflicts of interest applicable to federal employees and apply applicable professional standards safeguarding against conflicts of interests as appropriate. I will also seek advice of OIG counsel and work with the Office of Compliance and Integrity when necessary.

- b. For each system that you facilitated access to, what reason did DOGE provide for needing to access that system?

If confirmed, regardless if I worked with DOGE and what any such work entailed, I commit to following all federal laws, including federal regulations, regarding conflicts of interest applicable to federal employees and apply applicable professional standards safeguarding against conflicts of interests as appropriate. I will also seek advice of OIG counsel and work with the Office of Compliance and Integrity when necessary.

- c. Did any of the access requests relate to efforts to provide USDA information to other agencies? If so, which agencies and for what purpose?

If confirmed, regardless if I worked with DOGE and what any such work entailed, I commit to following all federal laws, including federal regulations, regarding conflicts of interest applicable to federal employees and apply applicable professional standards safeguarding against conflicts of interests as appropriate. I will also seek advice of OIG counsel and work with the Office of Compliance and Integrity when necessary.

Security Clearance

- 23. Do you currently hold an active security clearance? Please list the level of any security clearance you have had in the past ten years, including the applicable dates.

Current active Secret – since approximately January 2021.
TS – since before 2015 until about December 2021; SCI access granted sometime around February 2018 (i.e. TS/SCI).

**Senator Richard Blumenthal
Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. John Walk**

**Nominations Hearing
Wednesday, November 19, 2025**

1. Thank you for your commitment to ensure that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) independently investigates and holds Boars Head accountable for its role in the August 2024 listeria outbreak that caused sixty people to be hospitalized and ten people to tragically lose their lives. You also said you would get back to me about whether OIG's investigation into this outbreak is still ongoing. Please confirm the status of this investigation.

If confirmed, I will work with OIG staff to confirm the status.

2. Farm bailout payments designed to offset the impacts of President's Trump's trade war have overwhelmingly flowed to the largest and most successful farmers in the country. U.S. Department of Agriculture payment data shows that 6,430 big farm operations each collected \$100,000 or more since 2018 in each of the past three bailouts issued by the Trump administration.¹ Of those, a staggering 2,191 each took in more than a total of \$1 million. Further, the Government Accountability Office found high error payments in the bailouts.² An analysis from the Environmental Working Group also found that money that was supposed to go to farmers overwhelmingly went to people living in some of the wealthiest communities across the United States, including people who live on golf courses or city high-rises.³
 - a. If confirmed, what steps will you take through the Office of the Inspector General to reduce improper payments from money that is supposed to go to farmers?

If confirmed, I will leverage all statutory authority available to OIG to exercise effective oversight of all USDA programs to reduce improper payments across all relevant programs.

- b. If confirmed, how will you work to protect small farms and family farms that are being unfairly impacted by consolidation and fraud in assistance programs?

¹ Environmental Working Group, Farm Subsidy Database, "Market Facilitation Program (MFP) in the United States, 1995-2024," [https://farm.ewg.org/top_recips.php?fips=00000&progcode=total_mfp®ionname=theUnitedStates](https://farm.ewg.org/top_recips.php?fips=00000&progcode=total_mfp®ionname=theUnitedStates;); "Coronavirus Food Assistance Program – Round 1," https://farm.ewg.org/top_recips.php?fips=00000&progcode=tot_cfap1®ionname=theUnitedStates; "Coronavirus Food Assistance Program – Round 2 payments in the United States totaled \$19.3 billion from 1995-2024," https://farm.ewg.org/progdetail.php?fips=00000&progcode=tot_cfap2®ionname=theUnitedStates.

² Government Accountability Office, "Coronavirus Food Assistance Program: USDA Should Conduct More Rigorous Reviews of Payments to Producers," September 8, 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-22-104397>.

³ Environmental Working Group, "Trump USDA farmer bailout funds flowed to Mar-a-Lago neighbor instead," February 7, 2023, <https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2023/02/trump-usda-farmer-bailout-funds-flowed-mar-lago-neighbor-instead>.

If confirmed, I will leverage all statutory authority available to OIG to combat fraud and abuse across all assistance programs and evaluate deficiencies therein that present obstacles towards achieving the purpose of programs.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to John Walk, Nominee to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture
From Senator John Fetterman**

Full Committee Hearing:

*“Nominations of John Walk to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and
Thomas Bell to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services”*

November 19, 2025

1. Congress established the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) in 2008. Since then, it has served as a central organizing body and force for accountability among the IGs, and as a link between the public and the IG community. In late September 2025, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought illegally withheld congressionally appropriated funds for CIGIE to operate into FY2026. As a result, CIGIE, the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), Oversight.gov, and IG websites and whistleblower portals supported by Oversight.gov (including USDA OIG) have all shuttered their important work.

- a. In your view, how will the failure to fund CIGIE and the resources it provides impact the IG community?

I do not have a view on this matter. If confirmed, I will work with OIG leadership to prudently apply available resources to fulfill all OIG mission requirements.

- b. In CIGIE’s absence, how will you ensure that the Office of the Inspector General receives adequate training, oversight, and technical assistance that would otherwise be provided by CIGIE?

I will work with OIG leadership to prudently apply available resources to fulfill all OIG mission requirements.

- c. In the absence of Oversight.gov and funding, how will USDA OIG post new reports or operate a whistleblower portal?

I will work with OIG leadership to prudently apply available resources to fulfill all OIG mission requirements – including providing adequate means for whistleblowers to submit complaints and providing public transparency of the work of the office.

2. OIGs use moneys *identified* as wasted, defrauded, or abused to measure their return on investment. However, only a small percentage of those moneys are ever *recovered* or *recouped* by the federal government.

- a. Will you provide Congress with up-to-date information on recovered taxpayer dollars as part of your semi-annual reports to Congress, if confirmed?

OIG will provide all information the IG Act requires to be disclosed in the semi-annual reports to Congress.

- b. How will you work with the Department of Justice to improve rates of recovery of wasted, defrauded, or abused taxpayer dollars, if confirmed?

I will work with appropriate OIG staff and leadership to strengthen relationships with appropriate DoJ staff and to take all appropriate measures within its statutory authority to support DoJ in taking swift legal action to recover as much taxpayer dollars as possible under existing law.

3. I appreciated your responses to my questions for the record following your confirmation hearing before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. In response to one of those questions, you stated that you agree that USDA should issue the regulation on EBT security as required by H.R. 2617—Consolidation Appropriations Act, 2023.

- a. If confirmed, will you commit to working with my office to ensure that USDA is meeting its obligations under the law to issue this rule?

Yes.

Testimony of T. March Bell

Nominee for Inspector General -- Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Good morning, Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, and Members of the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs. It is an honor to appear before you as President Trump's Nominee for the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I thank the President and the Secretary for their support. Also, great thanks to my wife of 47 years, Mariam Bell, who is here today. I firmly believe that with each passing day, due to their leadership, America is on the path to generational change in the health of our fellow citizens and in the health care system itself.

It's great to be back in the Senate. Just forty plus short years ago, 1982, I began my career in Washington DC as a counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee assigned to the Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, chaired by then Senator Jeremiah Denton, a former Vietnam naval aviator and prisoner of war.

The early 1980s marked the emergence of public choice theory, the idea that over time government agencies choose their own well-being and the well-being of government adjacent non-government organizations over the core mission that Congress has assigned to them. Many people believe, as I do, that it is the central problem of the large federal bureaucracy.

This theory has taken deep roots at HHS today, producing waste, fraud and abuse. During the first Trump Administration, as Chief of Staff of the Office for Civil Rights, here's what I saw:

- I learned from the Chief Information Officer that HHS had over twenty procurement centers and that different parts of HHS were paying substantially different prices for the same computers from the same vendors.
- I learned that HHS has 522 separate line-item programs and that each often had 8 to 10 subprograms. Within that list were two dozen virtually identical job training programs. I learned from one program manager that her greatest challenge was getting her \$1 billion training budget out the door so Congress would not cut her off. She said that "We are in every Ritz Carlton in the country every August," to beat the deadline of the end of the fiscal year.
- I learned from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) annual report that certain disparities in health outcomes—such as higher diabetes and higher breast cancer rates—were due to diagnosis occurring sometimes decades too late. CDC made practical, commonsense suggestions to address this challenge. When I asked the authors of the report whether the CDC's practical recommendations were being implemented their countenance dropped – "not really" was the response.

- Every time we met with doctors we heard the same complaint – “I spend about a fourth of my time filling out paperwork to comply with federal regulations.” Doctors often say that the joy of the work they do is sullied by the drudgery of the compliance paperwork.

If confirmed as Inspector General I will examine, evaluate, audit, and investigate to support the initiatives of President Trump and Secretary Kennedy.

The traditional tools of the Inspector General are well known:

- *Remain independent while promoting transparency;*
- *Being tough but fair when making evaluations or recommendations is essential; and,*
- *Produce timely materials without compromising quality with clear accessible reports and regular communication.*

But the current challenges will require more than this list – the Office of the Inspector General must help explain what is actually going on and provide actionable information in support of the President’s and Secretary’s courageous and innovative change of direction for the improved health of all Americans.

I am happy to answer any questions.

REDACTED

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
STATEMENT OF INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEE
"QUESTIONNAIRE"**

The Committee requests the nominee provide the following information in a single written statement by typing the nominee's responses after each question below. Please provide **three copies** of your typed statement to Joshua Levasseur, Chief Clerk, 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Although in several cases the Committee questionnaire asks for the same or similar responses as the OGE 278e financial disclosure form, there are also cases where the questionnaire is more extensive or requests different information. Please read each question carefully.

Should the nominee have any questions about the questionnaire or its contents, please contact the Finance Committee at (202) 224-4515 and ask to speak with the lead nominations staffer for either the Majority or Minority.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name: (Include any former names used.) Thomas March Bell
2. Position to which nominated: Inspector General – Department of Health and Human Services
3. Date of nomination: March 24, 2025
4. Address: (List current residence, office, and mailing addresses.)
 - a. **REDACTED**
 - b. Committee on House Administration, 1309 Longworth HOB, Washington DC 20515
5. Date and place of birth: February 8, 1953, Fort Sill, Oklahoma
6. Marital status: (Include maiden name of wife or husband's name.) Mariam Mclowen.
7. Names and ages of children: N/A

8. Education: (List all secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted.)
 Northwest Classen High School 1967-68
 Northglenn High School 1968-1971 (graduated 1971- diploma)
 Bob Jones University 1971-1972
 Rockmont College 1972-1973
 Metropolitan State College 1973-1975
 Covenant College 1975-1978 (graduated 1978 BA in Philosophy)
 Western Kentucky University 1977-1979
 Pepperdine University School of Law 1979-1982 (graduated 1982 Juris Doctor)
9. Employment record: (List all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment for each job.)
- a. Graduate Assistant Western Kentucky University 1977-1979. Bowling Green, KY.
 - b. Frame Carpenter – Roark Construction – Nashville, Tn 1978-1979
 - c. Californians for Biblical Morality – June – August 1980 – voter registration.
 - d. Foundation for Christian Self Government 1980-1982 Northridge California – research assistant, law clerk.
 - e. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution June-August 1981, Washington, DC. Law clerk.
 - f. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism September 1982-1984, Washington DC. Counsel
 - g. Rutherford Institute 1985-1986 Executive Director, Manassas Va.
 - h. Freedom Council 1986-1987 – Washington DC. Policy research.
 - i. Robertson for President, 1987, Washington DC. Policy research and speech writing.
 - j. U.S Department of Justice 1987-1995. 10th and Constitution, Washington DC. Attorney Advisor, General Counsel, Trial Attorney,
 - k. U.S House of Representatives 1995-1996. Committee on Government Oversight and Reform. Counsel.
 - l. Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Richmond Virginia. 1996-1997.
 - m. Robertson School of Government. Virginia Beach, Va. Visiting Professor. 1997-1998.
 - n. Christian Solidarity International. Washington DC. Special Events Consultant for Sudan Events. 1999 (4-month contract)
 - o. Bauer for President. 1999-2000. Arlington, Va. Coalitions Director.
 - p. International Justice Mission. Director of Interventions and Vice President of Interventions. 2000-2003. Arlington, Va.
 - q. U.S. Department of Justice. 2003-2015. Trial Attorney. Senior Counsel

- r. for Human Trafficking.
Select Panel on Infant Lives. U.S. House of Representatives. 2015-2016.
Chief Counsel and Staff Director.
 - s. Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights. Washington, DC.
Chief of Staff. 2017-2021.
 - t. Institute on Faith Work and Economics. President. 2021-2022. Volunteer
nonpaid position.
 - u. Virginia Department of Public Safety, Senior Advisor, 2022-2023.
 - v. Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives.
General Counsel and Senior Investigative Counsel. 2024 to present.
10. Government experience: (List any current and former advisory, consultative,

honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State or local governments held since college, including dates, other than those listed above.)
N/A

11. Business relationships: (List all current and former positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner (e.g. limited partners, non-voting, etc.), proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, other business enterprise, or educational or other institution.) Board of Trustees – Covenant College. 2006-2016
12. Memberships: (List all current and former memberships, as well as any current and former offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations dating back to college, including dates for these memberships and offices.) Virginia State Bar 1985 to present.
13. Political affiliations and activities:
 - a. List all public offices for which you have been a candidate dating back to the age of 18. NONE
 - b. List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees, currently and during the last 10 years prior to the date of your nomination. NONE
 - c. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$50 or more for the past 10 years prior to the date of your nomination. NONE
14. Honors and Awards: (List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement received since the age of 18.)
 - a. Academic and athletic scholarship at Covenant College
 - b. Graduate Fellowship at Western Kentucky University
 - c. Grant in Aid at Pepperdine University School of Law
 - d. Various bonuses and awards for Outstanding service while at Department of Justice.
15. Published writings: (List the titles, publishers, dates and hyperlinks (as

applicable) of all books, articles, reports, blog posts, or other published materials you have written.)

- a. I wrote a couple of articles for Eternity Magazine (out of business in 1987) about obscenity law and terrorism. After a diligent search for a print copy and an online copy I was unable to locate a copy of these articles.
- b. I wrote for World and I Magazine (out of businesses in late 1980s. Subjects were drug policy and terrorism. After a diligent search for a print copy and an online copy I was unable to locate a copy of these articles.

16. Speeches: (List all formal speeches and presentations (e.g. PowerPoint) you have delivered during the past five years which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates. Provide the Committee with **one digital copy** of each formal speech and presentation).
NONE

17. Qualifications: (State what, in your opinion, qualifies you to serve in the position to which you have been nominated.)

I have wide reaching experience in varied settings and subject matters focused on investigation, evaluation, failure analysis, and criminal misconduct.

B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Will you sever all connections (including participation in future benefit arrangements) with your present employers, business firms, associations, or organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate? YES. If not, provide details.
2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? NO. If so, provide details.
3. Has any person or entity made a commitment or agreement to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service? NO. If so, provide details.
4. If you are confirmed by the Senate, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next Presidential election, whichever is applicable? YES. If not, explain.

C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Indicate any current and former investments, obligations, liabilities, or other personal relationships, including spousal or family employment, which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated. NONE
2. Describe any business relationship, dealing or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination), whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated. NONE
3. Describe any activity during the past 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination) in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. Activities performed as an employee of the Federal government need not be listed. NONE
4. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that are disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Provide the Committee with **two** copies of any trust or other agreements.) All potential conflicts with be resolved through consultation with the Ethics Officer at HHS.
5. **Two** copies of written opinions should be provided directly to the Committee by

the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you have been nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position.

6. The following information is to be provided only by nominees to the positions of United States Trade Representative and Deputy United States Trade Representative:

Have you ever represented, advised, or otherwise aided a foreign government or a foreign political organization with respect to any international trade matter at any time in any capacity? If so, provide the name of the foreign entity, a description of the work performed (including any work you supervised), the time frame of the work (e.g., March to December 1995), and the number of hours spent on the representation.

D. LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS

1. Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or been investigated, disciplined, or otherwise cited for a breach of ethics for unprofessional conduct before any court, administrative agency (e.g. an Inspector General's office), professional association, disciplinary committee, or other ethics enforcement entity at any time? NO. Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details, regardless of the outcome. NA
2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for a violation of any Federal, State, county or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details. NO
3. Have you ever been involved as a party in interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, provide details. NO
4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, provide details. NO
5. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be considered in connection with your nomination. NONE

E. TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS

1. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?

YES

2. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to provide such information as is requested by such committees? YES.

F. FINANCIAL DATA

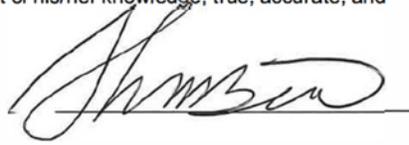
All information requested under this heading must be provided for yourself, your spouse, and your dependents. (This information will not be published in the record of the hearing on your nomination, but it will be retained in the Committee's files.)

REDACTED

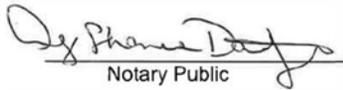
REDACTED

AFFIDAVIT

Thomas Mark Bell, being duly sworn, hereby states that he/she has read and signed the foregoing Statement of Information Requested of Nominee and that the information provided therein is, to the best of his/her knowledge, true, accurate, and complete.



Subscribed and sworn before me this 20th ^{May} day of 2025.


Notary Public



Rev. March 2023

REDACTED

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



September 4, 2025

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, I enclose a copy of the financial disclosure report filed by Thomas M. Bell, who has been nominated by President Trump for the position of Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services.

We have reviewed the report and have obtained advice from the agency concerning any possible conflict in light of its functions and the nominee's proposed duties. Also enclosed is an ethics agreement outlining the actions that the nominee will undertake to avoid conflicts of interest. Unless a date for compliance is indicated in the ethics agreement, the nominee must fully comply within three months of confirmation with any action specified in the ethics agreement.

Based thereon, we believe that this nominee is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest.

Sincerely,

Deborah Bortot
Chief, Presidential Nominations Branch

Enclosures **REDACTED**



May 1, 2025

Randall Hall
Designated Agency Ethics Official
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Mr. Hall:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services. It is my responsibility to understand and comply with commitments outlined in this agreement.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL COMMITMENTS

As required by the criminal conflicts of interest law at 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the particular matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me:

- Any spouse or minor child of mine;
- Any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner;
- Any organization in which I serve as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee, even if uncompensated; and
- Any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict, such as recusal from the particular matter or divestiture of an asset.

If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the regulatory exemption for diversified mutual funds and unit investment trusts at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will receive a live ethics briefing from a member of the ethics office after my confirmation but not later than 15 days after my appointment pursuant to the ethics program regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will submit my

Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance which documents my compliance with this ethics agreement.

I will not modify this ethics agreement without your approval and the approval of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) pursuant to the ethics agreement requirements contained in the financial disclosure regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2634.803(a)(4).

SECTION 2- OTHER COMMITMENTS

In order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest during my appointment, I, my spouse, and any minor children of mine, will not acquire any direct financial interests in entities listed on the FDA prohibited holdings list or in entities involved, directly or through subsidiaries, in the following industries: (1) research, development, manufacture, distribution, processing, storage, or sale of pharmaceutical, biotechnology, or medical devices, equipment, preparations, treatments, or products; (2) veterinary products or cosmetics; (3) healthcare management or delivery; (4) food and/or beverage production, processing, storage, or distribution; (5) manufacture, marketing, sale and distribution of tobacco products; (6) health, disability, or workers compensation insurance or related services; (7) communications media; (8) computer hardware, computer software, and related internet technologies; (9) wireless communications; (10) social sciences and economic research organizations; (11) energy or utilities; (12) commercial airlines, railroads, ship lines, and cargo carriers; or (13) any sector mutual fund or sector exchange-traded fund that concentrates its investments in one of the aforementioned industries, businesses, and sectors, in a single country other than the United States, or in bonds of a single state within the United States.

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC POSTING

I have been advised that this ethics agreement and the Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance will be posted publicly, consistent with the public information law at 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

March Bell

Thomas M. Bell

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to T. March Bell
Senator Gary C. Peters**

**Nomination of T. March Bell to be Inspector General, Department of Health and Human
Services**

Thursday, November 20, 2025

Inspector General Independence

1. Do you believe that President Trump violated the *Inspector General Act* when he fired IGs in January 2025 without the statutorily required congressional notification? Why or why not?

Response: I support President Trump's decision in this matter.

2. What factors will you use to guide your decision-making when deciding whether to launch a formal investigation of a matter within the Department? To what extent will congressional requests for investigations be prioritized?

Response: I will let the facts inform my investigations into credible reports of misconduct by entities under the purview of the HHS OIG.

3. Once an investigation has concluded and recommendations for improvement within the Department have been made, what is your view of the role of the OIG in following up to ensure completion of recommendations? How will you ensure recommendations are implemented to the greatest extent possible?

Response: I will do everything in my power to ensure recommendations are implemented.

4. Were any conditions, expressed or implied, attached to your nomination? If so, please explain.

Response: No.

5. Have you made any commitments with respect to the policies and principles you will attempt to implement as IG? If so, what are they, and to whom were the commitments made?

Response: I am not entering with preconceived notions on anything before I get a full and complete review of the facts.

6. Do you believe that the President can ever disregard a court order? If so, under what circumstances? Please explain.

Response: I believe President Trump will follow court orders.

7. If the President or anyone acting at the direction of the President or on his behalf asks you to violate the law, will you decline to do so?

Response: I commit to following the law.

8. Do you seek out dissenting views and encourage constructive critical dialogue with subordinates? Please provide examples of times in your career when you have done so.

Response: Yes, I appreciate subordinates who voice their opinion. In fact, a diversity of viewpoints makes for a more complete and fulsome range of policy options.

9. What would you do if the President or anyone acting at the direction of the President directed you to initiate or stop an investigation?

Response: I am convinced that the President will do no such thing.

10. What steps would you take to ensure that OIG reports are not inappropriately weakened or interfered with by political appointees?

Response: I will be sure to review all work products to ensure that they are of the highest quality.

11. If you believed HHS employees or senior officials were not fully cooperating with an OIG inquiry or were attempting to interfere with an OIG inquiry, what steps would you take?

Response: I will do all in my power to ensure that investigations are completed in a fair and transparent manner.

12. When you first joined HHS in 2017, you recused yourself from matters involving Planned Parenthood. If confirmed, do you commit to once again, to recuse yourself from these matters? If not, why not?

Response: I was cleared by the Ethics Office to work on any matters related to Planned Parenthood.

13. With regard to your role as Chief of Staff in the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) from 2017 to 2021, you have stated that virtually every document (i.e., every memo, regulation, etc.) went through your office for OCR review. Do you intend to recuse yourself from any particular matters that you worked on in that role?

Response: I will follow all conflicts of interest laws.

14. In your work on the House panel investigating alleged sales of fetal tissue, Democratic Members and staff say that you prevented them from having full access to evidence you presented. Why should Congress trust that as Inspector General, you will be equally

responsive to both Republican and Democratic Members of Congress?

Response: I commit to being responsive to all members of Congress.

15. As General Counsel and Senior Investigative Counsel for the House Committee on House Administration, you published a report on April 2, 2025, titled: "Fraud on ActBlue: How the Democrats' Top Fundraising Platform Opens the Door for Illegal Election Contributions." Later that month, on April 24th, President Trump asked the Attorney General to investigate online fundraising platforms, citing the allegations in your interim report against ActBlue.

- a. To what extent have you coordinated with the White House, the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury, or their staff, on the ActBlue investigation?

Response: I did not coordinate with the White House on the investigation.

- b. Were you aware prior to the April 24, 2025 Presidential Memorandum that President Trump would request this investigation?

Response: No.

Priorities for HHS IG Role

16. Do you intend to investigate abortion providers as Inspector General?

Response: I commit to investigating credible reports of misconduct by entities under the purview of the HHS OIG.

17. In your Senate Finance Committee nomination hearing, Senator Lankford questioned you about your belief on the need for oversight of abortion facilities and clinics asking, "do you commit to looking at it and following the facts wherever they go, no matter what the political repercussions are?" You responded, "that's exactly the kind of thing that an inspector general must have the courage to do, follow the law and follow that facts, even if it's unpopular." What specific laws and authorities do you believe give the HHS Inspector General the authority to investigate abortion facilities and clinics?

Response: I am empowered to investigate credible reports of misconduct by entities under the purview of the HHS OIG.

18. Do you intend to investigate allegations of illegal fetal tissue research at the University of Pittsburgh?

Response: I will investigate credible reports of misconduct by entities under the purview of the HHS OIG.

19. As I said in my opening statement, given your highly partisan track record, I am concerned that you will use the Inspector General's Office to pursue political aims attacking women's reproductive rights. You've led a partisan congressional investigation into an alleged sale of fetal tissue for profit, a claim that was thoroughly investigated and thoroughly debunked. Additionally, as chief of staff in the Office for Civil Rights at HHS during President Trump's first term, you limited women's access to reproductive care. Given this history, can you commit to recusing yourself from any abortion related matters?

Response: I will follow all conflicts of interest laws.

Whistleblowers

20. In your view, what value do whistleblowers provide to the federal government and U.S. taxpayers?

Response: I support the critical role of whistleblowers and agree that they can provide valuable information.

21. Protecting whistleblowers and their confidentiality is of the utmost importance to this Committee.

- a. Please describe any previous experience with handling whistleblower complaints. What steps did you take to ensure those individuals did not face retaliation and that their claims were thoroughly investigated?

Response: I commit to abide by federal whistleblower laws.

- b. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that whistleblower complaints are handled appropriately within HHS?

Response: I will do all in my power to ensure federal whistleblower laws are followed correctly.

Elections

22. Who won the 2020 Presidential election?

23. Do you believe the 2020 election was free and fair?

Response 22-23: Congress certified the electoral result for Joe Biden on January 7, 2021.

24. Who won the 2024 Presidential election?

25. Do you believe that the 2024 election was free and fair?

Response 24-25: Donald Trump won the 2024 election fairly.

Privacy and data sharing

26. In August, a federal court ordered HHS to stop sharing Medicaid data with DHS for immigration enforcement purposes, arguing that “using CMS data for immigration enforcement threatens to significantly disrupt the operation of Medicaid.” If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that HHS is using and sharing data in an appropriate manner that adheres to privacy law and policy and advances the mission of HHS?

Response: I commit to following federal law related to data sharing.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Thomas Bell, Nominee to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
From Senator John Fetterman**

Full Committee Hearing:
*“Nominations of John Walk to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and
Thomas Bell to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services”*

November 19, 2025

1. Congress established the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) in 2008. Since then, it has served as a central organizing body and force for accountability among the IGs, and as a link between the public and the IG community. In late September 2025, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought illegally withheld congressionally appropriated funds for CIGIE to operate into FY2026. As a result, CIGIE, the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), Oversight.gov, and IG websites and whistleblower portals supported by Oversight.gov have all shuttered their important work.

- a. In your view, how will the failure to fund CIGIE and the resources it provides impact the IG community?

Response: I will review impoundment decisions to ensure they are consistent with federal law.

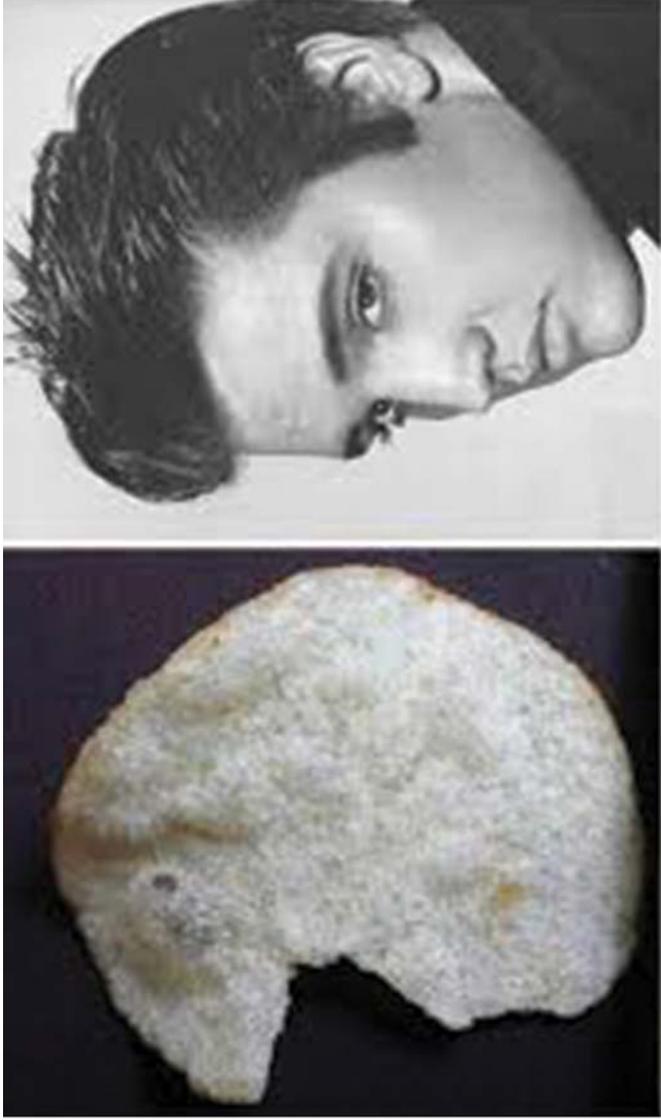
- b. In CIGIE’s absence, how will you ensure that the Office of the Inspector General receives adequate training, oversight, and technical assistance that would otherwise be provided by CIGIE?

Response: I will do all in my power to ensure the functions of the HHS OIG continue effectively.

2. OIGs use moneys *identified* as wasted, defrauded, or abused to measure their return on investment. However, only a small percentage of those moneys are ever *recovered* or *recouped* by the federal government.

- a. Will you provide Congress with up-to-date information on recovered taxpayer dollars as part of your semi-annual reports to Congress, if confirmed?
- b. How will you work with the Department of Justice to improve rates of recovery of wasted, defrauded, or abused taxpayer dollars, if confirmed?

Response: I commit to transparency on this topic and am willing to work with other agencies to improve rates of recovery.



**Does this potato chip look like
Elvis?**

**Post-Hearing Submission for the Record
From Senator John Fetterman**

Full Committee Hearing:

*“Nominations of John Walk to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Agriculture; and
Thomas Bell to be Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services”*

November 19, 2025

On May 1, 2025, I sent U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins a letter requesting that the Department reinstate Pennsylvania’s funds and contracts associated with the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). As Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Customer Services, Mr. John Walk responded to this letter on behalf of Secretary Rollins on June 10, 2025. Mr. Walk’s response did not provide answers to my questions on LFPA or TEFAP, claiming that active litigation precluded answering my questions despite there being no active litigation on TEFAP to my knowledge. Copies of the May 1 letter and June 10 response are attached.

JOHN FETTERMAN
PENNSYLVANIA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

<https://www.fetterman.senate.gov>

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

May 1, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Thank you for the work you've done for U.S. farmers, ranchers, and producers since February 13th, 2025. As we discussed when we met last December, I knew we would disagree in some areas, but I am encouraged by the way you've used your platform and voice to put producers first and support their livelihoods. That's why I am asking you to reinstate funding for two program that have been directly benefiting farmers: the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Your department recently cancelled both the third round of LFPA funding and TEFAP purchases.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (PA) has received nearly \$30 million through two rounds of LFPA funding (see Appendix A). Their allocation represents just 4% of the total LFPA amount, but the PA Department of Agriculture (PDA) has successfully leveraged this money to help farmers feed hungry Pennsylvanians. Of their allocation, PDA has purchased \$6.39 million in dairy products, \$5.09 million in eggs, \$4.46 million in meat and poultry products, and \$7.56 million in fresh produce, from a total of 189 independent farmers (see Appendix B). The funding has allowed the agricultural industry in PA to flourish (see Appendix C).

PDA also purchases TEFAP commodities—including fresh milk and canned/frozen vegetables—that are sourced from hundreds of local farms in PA. For example, PDA has told my staff that \$213,306.21 worth of dairy products from as many as 150-200 PA dairy farms was on order to be purchased, but recently cancelled. This cancellation of a contract throws my constituents into economic uncertainty, as input costs continue to rise and their supply chains become more volatile due to trade concerns.

While I appreciate that Section 32 purchases are making up for some of the value of the cancelled contracts, you must agree that Section 32 and TEFAP are separate programs serving distinct functions. Section 32 purchases serve a market stabilizing function, while TEFAP primarily serves hungry families. Though *both* programs support farmer livelihoods. The Section 32 purchases are also not a one-for-one replacement for the TEFAP purchases, and do not make farmers whole after their TEFAP contracts were cancelled.

Farmers—like all business owners—need certainty that the government will honor their contracts when they enter into business agreement with the USDA.

I appreciate our conversation on Tuesday, March 25, to discuss this issue. My staff was told by your team that the third round of LFPA (LFPA 25) was rescinded because PA does not need it. My staff was further told that PDA still had \$23 million left of unspent LFPA funds from the first two rounds, and later that number was updated to \$12 million by your staff. This is false, according to PDA's records, demonstrated by Appendix D, a claim receipt the PA Comptroller submitted for reimbursement. As you'll see, on March 27, PDA submitted a request for \$9,100,281.88. As the claim shows, they had already received \$17,859,688. Subtracting these two amounts from PA's total disbursement shows only \$2,964,640.12 left over. PDA affirms to my staff that they will spend this amount through July, and easily continue their implementation of this beneficial program with the third round of funding they deserve.

Further, I appreciate your response (see Appendix E) to Ranking Member Klobuchar's and my questions, along with our colleagues, about USDA actions under Executive Orders and Presidential Memoranda, dated April 3, 2025. In that response, however, you stated, "The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and all other nutrition programs have remained uninterrupted." This is inaccurate, as shown by USDA's demonstrated cancellation of TEFAP contracts. This decision interrupted PDA's operations and farmer incomes in my commonwealth. I ask that you honor the intent of your April 3rd letter by allowing PDA to fulfill these farmer contracts under TEFAP.

With this information in mind, no later than Friday, May 9, 2025, I ask that you 1) answer the following questions and 2) commit in writing to both disburse LFPA25 funds to PA and reinstate all of PDA's TEFAP contracts, as quickly as possible.

- 1) On what date did you—or an authorized staff—internally approve rescinding LFPA25 funds?
- 2) On what date did you—or an authorized staff—internally approve cancelling TEFAP contracts?
- 3) What is your justification—especially in light of evidence contradicting USDA's stated justification to my staff—for rescinding LFPA25 funds? Please provide all relevant internal communications, documents, and authority justifying this decision.
- 4) What is your justification for cancelling TEFAP contracts? Please provide all relevant internal communications, documents, and authority justifying this decision.
- 5) What plans exist to use the rescinded LFPA and cancelled TEFAP funds?
 - a. If such plans exist, has the money already been spent on those other plans?
 - b. Specifically, how much of the money has been spent on what other plans and programs?
 - c. Through what statutory authority did you move this money to other programs?

Thank you in advance for your helpful responses to my questions, and your continued commitment for our staffs to work together on this. I look forward to our

continued work to promote U.S. agricultural success, which LFPA and TEFAP contribute towards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Fetterman', written in a cursive style.

John Fetterman
U.S. Senator

Appendix B

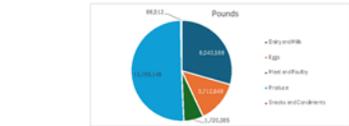
LFPFA Year 1/2/3 Report Materials

Dollars		Pounds		Dairy and Milk		Eggs		Meat and Poultry		Produce		Stocks/Commodities		Grand Totals	
Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds
03/2002	\$1,762,581.77	293,139	881,128.80	111,202	801,108.53	273,229	824,268.29	61,223	886,158.81	1,76,883	81,76,883	81,76,203.77	293,139	881,128.80	1,121,202
04/2002	\$1,402,241.67	1,306,631	\$304,538.61	397,808	801,108.53	273,229	824,268.29	61,223	\$381,829.55	818,413	807,69	809	\$1,402,241.68	1,306,631	
01/2003	\$1,658,288.88	1,478,269	\$705,132.43	438,243	\$922,188.55	352,311	892,682.42	28,208	\$389,840.24	618,166	\$24,374.24	\$1,408	\$1,658,288.88	1,478,269	
02/2003	\$771,844.67	1,481,666	\$184,548.68	434,004	\$382,646.14	311,163	\$73,882.35	28,308	\$218,975.51	276,881			\$771,844.68	1,481,666	
03/2003	\$489,511.73	871,393	\$141,883.29	228,878	\$114,888.21	155,316	\$234,15.17	6,847	\$158,164.89	251,887	\$29,489.13	32,887	\$489,511.73	871,393	
Total	\$4,883,478.12	4,844,247	\$991,891.37	1,613,928	\$1,483,374.43	6,801,629	\$884,155.23	128,568	\$1,158,976.04	3,843,189	\$4,508.97	64,822	\$4,883,478.12	4,844,247	

Dollars		Pounds		Dairy and Milk		Eggs		Meat and Poultry		Produce		Stocks/Commodities		Grand Totals	
Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds
03/2003	\$1,128,882.77	1,678,824	\$19,895.43	188,885	\$188,851.88	231,854	\$122,264.79	32,492	\$928,261.71	903,181	\$77.88	22	\$1,128,882.77	1,678,824	
04/2003	\$2,190,854.45	3,137,623	\$14,219.87	822,428	\$262,208.88	298,824	\$24,131.11	221,588	\$913,683.57	1,796,391			\$2,190,854.45	3,137,623	
01/2004	\$3,841,268.58	4,888,137	\$84,488.23	1,827,784	\$471,111.73	493,291	\$458,414.39	171,487	\$1,225,288.63	2,418,223	\$26,313.12	2,344	\$3,841,268.58	4,888,137	
02/2004	\$2,571,203.88	4,173,826	\$1,808,718.60	1,238,311	\$936,698.89	371,548	\$798,829.20	291,874	\$914,847.59	2,118,149			\$2,571,203.88	4,173,826	
03/2004	\$1,440,306.48	1,284,789	\$358,811.43	482,839	\$158,293.55	127,339	\$445,889.59	114,328	\$443,227.17	718,287	\$42,207.12	10,844	\$1,440,306.48	1,284,789	
Total	\$11,889,833.82	14,431,226	\$3,641,185.82	4,912,648	\$1,648,884.86	1,827,923	\$2,295,874.67	848,342	\$4,803,826.67	7,843,474	\$78,151.26	26,318	\$11,889,833.82	14,431,226	

Dollars		Pounds		Dairy and Milk		Eggs		Meat and Poultry		Produce		Stocks/Commodities		Grand Totals	
Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds	Dollars	Pounds
03/2004	\$2,289,249.26	2,884,887	\$787,228.81	777,868	\$771,228.41	287,374	\$56,243.23	245,879	\$548,153.81	1,383,883			\$2,289,249.26	2,884,887	
04/2004	\$3,384,268.58	3,321,146	\$891,817.47	848,945	\$718,197.32	384,493	\$842,264.81	482,239	\$1,861,268.98	1,688,878			\$3,384,268.58	3,321,146	
01/2005 (Jan/Feb...)	\$2,356,428.31	1,913,221	\$853,761.95	685,718	\$762,809.97	381,662	\$372,228.09	96,468	\$487,889.26	846,827	\$18,487.06	1,779	\$2,356,428.31	1,913,221	
02/2005															
03/2005															
Total	\$8,223,886.15	8,824,253	\$2,352,759.33	2,412,221	\$1,638,859.64	993,865	\$1,771,286.23	744,611	\$2,381,881.95	3,879,374	\$19,487.86	3,779	\$8,223,886.15	8,824,253	

Value	Pounds
\$3,641,185.82	27,327,848
\$1,648,884.86	8,648,589
\$2,295,874.67	3,712,648
\$448,342	1,728,095
\$4,803,826.67	12,765,448
\$78,151.26	88,512
\$11,889,833.82	27,327,848



Appendix C

LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROGRAM (USDA)

SUPPORTING PENNSYLVANIA FARMERS, FOOD BANKS & FAMILIES

The Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) provides funding for states to purchase local foods to help support farmers and feed families. While increasing local food consumption, these funds help build and expand economic opportunities for farmers who operate small businesses, are just beginning, may not have access to limited resources.

27.2 MILLION POUNDS OF FOOD



purchased from PA farmers and producers via LFPA

EXPANDING MARKETS FOR PRODUCERS

The LFPA Program is designed to help farms and vendors of all sizes manage risk and create markets for new product, providing an economic safety net while vendors build their customer base. Additionally, vendors can work with food banks to plan for needed products for the upcoming season. As supply is available for the food bank, it can then be purchased using LFPA funds to be distributed locally.

\$23.6 MILLION DOLLARS INVESTED



from LFPA in PA's food and agricultural economy

INVESTING IN AGRICULTURE

Supporting local agriculture and small producers as well as food banks, Feeding Pennsylvania manages the program in collaboration with partners at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From August 2022 to February 2025, purchases made by food banks from producers via the LFPA program totaled more than \$23.6 million.

22.6 MILLION MEALS PROVIDED

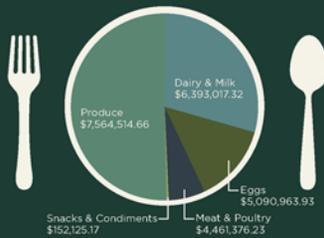


to more than 5.5 million households throughout PA

IMPACTING COMMUNITIES

LFPA is designed to strengthen independent agribusinesses; over 89% of participating vendors are small businesses. LFPA vendors are passionate about supporting their communities, and many vendors choose to deliver directly to their local food pantries. Collectively, these pantries coordinate with over 2,000 distribution sites to provide food purchased through LFPA to Pennsylvanians facing hunger.

VALUE OF LFPA COMMODITIES



AIDING UNDER-RESOURCED AREAS

78%

of locations in Pennsylvania that distribute food purchased by food banks through LFPA are located in under-resourced rural and densely populated urban areas.



All figures reference data collected between August 2022 and February 2025.

LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROGRAM (USDA)
PROVEN TO STRENGTHEN PA AGRIBUSINESSES

“



Think We Not Me Farming Program
 📍 **State College, Centre County**

As an organization, Think We Not Me donated over 46,000 pounds of fresh produce in 2024 to over twenty local food banks and organizations that provide food for the food insecure. Probably one third of our budget includes reimbursement from the LFPA program through the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. If we did not have this reimbursement to cover part of our expenses, we probably would only be able to donate half the amount of produce that we provide.

-Bill Zimmer, President

”

“



Brace's Orchard
 📍 **Dallas, Luzerne County**

Our relationship with the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg NEPA Regional Food Bank has been a tremendous help for our business. Since LFPA funds have been available, we have worked together the past three seasons and look forward to continuing the relationship in 2025. The food bank places regular orders and purchases some extra skids when we have surplus. These orders help cover the costs for harvesting and storing produce throughout the winter and spring.

-Logan Brace, Owner and Ninth-Generation Farmer

”

“



Backpack Yogurt (Country Foods)
 📍 **Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County**

Working with the food banks through LFPA funding has provided a crucial opportunity for us to expand our reach and improve our production, allowing us to deliver high-quality dairy products to those in need. By partnering with food banks, Backpack Yogurt has been able to indirectly support over sixty small dairy farms in PA. The increased demand for our products has created a ripple effect, providing these farms with more consistent sales and enhancing their economic stability.

-Mike Baysal, Owner

”

“



John Schultz & Sons
 📍 **North East, Erie County**

We are a sixth-generation family fruit farm. Our apples are grown, packed and delivered to folks within a 100-mile radius of our farm. We have supported our local food banks for decades and continue to see their needs grow as declining SNAP benefits and rising prices leave people in need of a helping hand. LFPA funding provides more locally sourced food to food banks while spending less on freight, warehousing and spoilage.

-Roger Schultz, Partner

”



Appendix D

Claim (CLM-144496)

Claim Information:

1a. Request for Advance or Reimbursement
REIMBURSEMENT

1b. Type of Payment Requested:
PARTIAL

2. Basis of Request
ACCRUAL

3. Federal Sponsoring Agency and Organizational Element to Which This Report is Submitted
Agricultural Marketing Service

4. Federal Grant or Other Identifying Number Assigned by Federal Agency
AM22LFPA0000C029

5. Partial Payment Request Number for this Request
#4

6. Employer Identification Number:

7. Recipient's Account or Identifying Number:
M42223

8. Period Covered By This Request
From **To**
7/1/24 3/27/25

9. Recipient Organization
Name: AGRICULTURE, PENNSYLVANIA
 DEPARTMEN T OF
Number and Street: 2301 NORTH CAMERON STREET
City: HARRISBURG
State: PA
Zip: 17110-9408

10. Payee (Where check is to be sent if different than item 9)
Name:
Number and Street:
City:
State:
Zip:

Claim Amount:

11. Computation of Amount of Reimbursements/Advances Requested

Programs/ Functions/ Activities	As of Date	(a)	(b) Agency Calculations (For your reference only)	(c) Programs/ Functions/ Activities	Total
a. Total program outlays to date	3/27/25	\$15,182,027.06			\$15,182,027.06
b. Less: cumulative program income		\$0.00			\$0.00
c. Net program outlays (line a minus line b)		\$15,182,027.06			\$15,182,027.06
d. Estimated net cash outlays for advance period		\$0.00			
e. Total (sum of lines c & d)		\$15,182,027.06			\$15,182,027.06
f. Non-Federal share of amount on line e		\$0.00			\$0.00
g. Federal share of amount on line e		\$15,182,027.06			\$15,182,027.06
h. Federal payments previously requested		\$6,080,000.00	\$0.00		\$6,080,000.00
i. Federal share now requested (line g minus line h)		\$9,102,027.06			\$9,102,027.06
j. Advances required by month, when					

requested by Federal grantor agency for use in making prescheduled advances	1st month				
	2nd month				
	3rd month				

12. Alternate Computation for Advances Only

	Amount
a. Estimated Federal cash outlays that will be made during period covered by the advance	\$
b. Less: Estimated balance of Federal cash on hand as of beginning of advance period	\$
c. Amount requested (line a minus line b)	\$

13. Certification

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the data on the reverse are correct and that all outlays were made in accordance with the grant conditions or other agreement and that payment is due and has not been previously requested.	SIGNATURE OR AUTHORIZED CERTIFYING OFFICIAL Alfredo Rivera	DATE REQUEST SUBMITTED 03/27/25
	TYPED OR PRINTED NAME OR TITLE Alfredo Rivera, Accountant 3	TELEPHONE (AREA CODE, NUMBER, EXTENSION) (717) 425-6777

14. Requested Amounts by Cost Element

Cost Element	Disbursed Amount	Open Balance	Direct Requested Amount	Indirect Requested Amount	Total Requested Amount
Personnel	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Fringe Benefit	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Supplies	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Contractual	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Other	\$17,859,688.00	\$12,064,922.00	\$9,100,281.88	\$1,745.18	\$9,102,027.06
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	---	---	\$0.00
Total	\$17,859,688.00	\$12,064,922.00	\$9,100,281.88	\$1,745.18	\$9,102,027.06

Signature

Select a Partner by typing in the name of the individual in the box. Matching names will appear in a drop down box for your selection.

A Primary Certifying Official is a required Partner and notifications and work items will be sent to all listed Certifying Official.

Primary Certifying Official	Secondary Certifying Official
Alfredo Rivera	

Attachments

Title	Operator	Date/Time
ARPA Worksheet	PATRICK RUSSO	3/27/2025 2:09 PM

Comments

Comment	Commented By	Date/Time
Add attachment	Alfredo Rivera	3/27/25 2:02 PM

Appendix E



Secretary Brooke L. Rollins

Washington, D.C. 20250

April 3, 2025

THE HONORABLE AMY KLOBUCHAR
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar,

Thank you to you and your colleagues for your letter sent on February 5, 2025, to Acting Secretary Gary Washington regarding recent Executive Orders and Presidential Memoranda. As you know, the Acting Secretary responded February 7. Additionally, thank you for your subsequent letter on February 10. Today, I wanted to provide further insight as I approach my 50th day in office.

First, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) appreciates your commitment to farmers and ranchers. But as part of my responsibility during a transition, I undertook a substantive review of contracts, personnel, and spending.

I realize this review process has caused concern among producers and consumers who participate in longstanding USDA programs. However, as this review continues, program funding has been released. To date, funds have been released for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), the Dairy Business Innovation (DBI) Initiatives grant program, the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Cooperative Agreement Program, Assisting Specialty Crop Exports (ASCE) initiative, the Land-Grant University Capacity grants, Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development, the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), Empowering Rural America (New ERA) and Powering Affordable Clean Energy (PACE) programs.

It is also so important to note that programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and all other nutrition programs have remained uninterrupted. While the Biden Administration inflated statutory programs with Commodity Credit Corporation dollars without any plans for long-term solutions, and even in 2024, used the pandemic as a reason to make funding announcements, USDA will not lose focus on its mission of strengthening food security, supporting agricultural markets, and ensuring access to nutritious foods. For example, earlier this month, USDA released over half a billion in

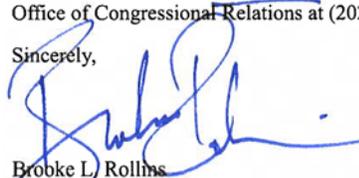
previously obligated funds for local procurement programs to fulfill existing commitments and support ongoing local food purchases. Additionally, USDA recently announced \$261 million in available fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts, made possible through Section 32 purchases. These foods go directly to food banks and other charitable organizations. The Department will continue to use its procurement authority to support producers and consumers where appropriate, and with 16 nutrition programs under its purview, ensure families continue to have access to affordable and abundant food.

Each underscore the Trump Administration's commitment to rural communities, including the farmers, ranchers, and small businesses and their essential role in building a stronger, more resilient, and more secure America. As this review continues, I hope our staff can convene in regularly scheduled updates. Not only does that allow me to share information, but it allows us to collaborate.

My goals are many, including to make certain American agriculture remains the most competitive in the world. I also want to ensure we return the Department to one that puts farmers first and revitalizes rural America. And no matter the goal, each have one thing in common: to protect the food and national security of our great nation.

Please note a version of this letter will be shared with your colleagues. If you have further questions or concerns, please call me directly or have a member of your staff contact USDA's Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095 or ocr@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

June 10, 2025

THE HONORABLE JOHN FETTERMAN
United States Senate
142 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Fetterman,

Thank you for your May 1, 2025, letter to Secretary Rollins, regarding the termination of certain funding for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). I am responding on behalf of the Secretary.

USDA's actions regarding LFPA and TEFAP are currently subject to or related to ongoing litigation. As a result, we are unable to answer your questions or provide the documents you requested at this time.

With 16 robust nutrition programs and the Section 32 market support program in place, USDA remains focused on its core mission: strengthening food security, supporting agricultural markets, and ensuring access to nutritious food. USDA continues to purchase food for TEFAP, with more than \$669 million spent in Fiscal Year 2025, as of May 14, 2025, to connect families to food. Additionally, since March 27, 2025, USDA has announced \$328 million in available fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, Atlantic groundfish, canned pears, dried sweet cherries, great northern beans, and Pacific pink shrimp made possible through Section 32 purchases. This food goes directly to food banks and other charitable organizations.

In total, so far this year, Pennsylvania TEFAP has received over \$35 million in support. Regarding the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) and Local Food for Schools (LFS) Cooperative Agreement programs, as of June 3, 2025, \$2.9 million and \$6.8 million remain available, respectively, to assist Pennsylvania farmers in the coming growing season.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have additional questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at 202-720-7095 or OCR@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Walk".

John Walk
Acting Deputy Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9600
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