

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION**

**June 22, 2023**

**FCC Inspector General Nomination**

**REPUBLICAN QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**

**Fara Damelin**

**Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Cruz**  
**To FCC IG Nominee Fara Damelin**

- 1. Will you agree to provide all information and documentation sought by me in my capacity as Ranking Member pursuant to my congressional oversight authority?**

Yes. If confirmed, I agree to provide all information and documentation that you seek in your capacity as Ranking Member pursuant to your congressional oversight authority, as authorized by law.

- 2. Will you commit to immediately informing me and members of this Committee if you are subject to political pressure or other influences from the Executive Office of the President, political appointees within the Federal Communications Commission, or any other outside entities that would prevent you from independently and objectively performing your duties as Inspector General?**

Yes. If confirmed, in accordance with the Inspector General Act, I commit to keeping Congress fully and currently informed, to include notifying the Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of this Committee without delay if I am prevented from independently and objectively performing my duties as Inspector General, due to political pressure or other influences from the Executive Office of the President, political appointees within the Federal Communications Commission, or any other outside entities.

- 3. What steps will you take to ensure that the FCC Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducts investigations thoroughly and impartially?**

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that FCC OIG investigations are conducted in accordance with applicable professional standards and adhere to all key principles including thoroughness, impartiality, fairness, objectivity, timeliness, and ethics.

I will ensure that the FCC OIG investigators follow the facts and evidence, and conduct investigations independently and objectively from inception to conclusion, without bias or political influence. In addition, I will work with the FCC OIG staff to ensure that the FCC OIG's internal investigative policies are in full compliance with applicable professional standards and incorporate leading practices from the IG community.

- 4. The FCC's Acting Inspector General is in the process of completing an audit of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), focused on the program's effectiveness in expanding broadband adoption. The Acting FCC IG plans to publish this report in November 2023. Will you commit to completing this report and keeping it on track for release in November 2023?**

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the timely and thorough completion of all ongoing FCC OIG audits in accordance with applicable professional standards, which incorporate requirements related to ethics, independence, impartiality, professional judgment, competence,

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FCC IG Nominee Fara Damelin's Responses to Questions for the Record

professional education, and quality control. I will ensure that the FCC OIG auditors follow the facts and evidence, and conduct audits independently and objectively from inception to conclusion, without bias or political influence.

Because I am not currently with the FCC OIG, I do not know the status of the referenced audit and have not been briefed on the current findings, milestones, and outstanding data or information requests. However, if confirmed, I will make it a priority to obtain a full briefing on the status of this audit and, if it has not yet been issued, I will promptly provide you and your staff with an update and answer any questions that you may have.

**5. As you are aware, I have asked the FCC's Acting Inspector General to investigate the handling of the Standard General-TEGNA transaction due to the appearance of partisan bias. Will you commit to thoroughly completing this investigation?**

If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the timely and thorough completion of all ongoing FCC OIG investigations in accordance with applicable professional standards, and that the FCC OIG investigators follow the facts and evidence, and conduct investigations independently and objectively, without bias or political influence.

Because I am not currently with the FCC OIG, I have not been briefed on the portfolio of investigations or other oversight being conducted by the office. In general, to protect the integrity of ongoing investigations, OIGs do not confirm or deny the existence of a pending investigation.

If confirmed, I will promptly obtain a full briefing from the FCC OIG on the status of any pending oversight, to include investigations, audits, evaluations, and other reviews. If permitted by law, I will notify you if there is pending oversight related to the referenced transaction and provide general expectations around timing. In addition, I commit to engaging with you and your staff to ensure that I understand the full scope of your concerns.

**Questions for the Record from Senator Sullivan**  
**To FCC IG Nominee Fara Damelin**

To All Nominees:

1. We are in the process of distributing a historic amount of funding for broadband deployment across the country - \$65 billion alone from IIJA. Alaska is eager to make the most of this opportunity, and we have more work to do than most. But one thing I continue to be very conscious of, is letting this opportunity to go to waste. I've talked to the Chairwoman about this concern. She mentioned a number of steps to take, including making clear, loudly, from the beginning, the penalties for waste, fraud, and abuse; also extensive vetting on the front end to ensure that applicants can deliver the service and speeds they claim.

**1a. Do you think the various agencies tasked with distributing this money have established adequate safeguards against waste, fraud, and abuse?**

Fraud risk management and reducing improper payments are key challenges across the Federal government, as documented by numerous OIG and GAO reports issued over the past several years. These challenges have been exacerbated since the pandemic, with the expedited release of unprecedented amounts of federal funding to address emergency circumstances, to include the long-term health, education, and economic hardships caused by the pandemic and emergency circumstances. Due to time pressures in releasing funding quickly, some agencies have had difficulty building in adequate controls at the front end of program distribution to identify high risk recipients and protect program funds from fraud, waste, and abuse.

**1b. What more can be done in terms of agency coordination?**

During my tenure with the National Science Foundation Office of Inspector General, I had the opportunity to coordinate with other OIGs and program officials on protecting small business program funding administered through multiple federal agencies. We shared and compared data, identified leading practices such as internal controls and fraud indicators, and produced and delivered joint training and outreach. This coordinated effort culminated in joint workshops and the development of resources to share leading practices to protect program funding across the government. The Office of Management and Budget recently issued two memoranda towards improving agency coordination to take a government-wide approach to protecting federal funds: [Promoting Accountability through Cooperation among Agencies and Inspectors General \(whitehouse.gov\)](#) and [Advancing Effective Stewardship of Taxpayer Resources and Outcomes in the Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#). The latter memorandum focused on how agencies can better work together to protect federal programs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act administered across multiple federal agencies.

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The strategies identified by OMB can help protect government programs through enhanced coordination and include approaches I've seen implemented successfully throughout my career. OIGs are often in the position to identify opportunities for increased coordination among agencies to protect federal programs, with longstanding working groups such as the IG community's Grant Fraud Working Group and Whistleblower Protection Coordinator Working Group. If confirmed, I will look for opportunities such as these to enhance coordination to protect FCC programs.

**1c. What role can the IG play in this effort?**

As noted above, during my tenure with the IG community, I have actively participated in coordinated efforts with agencies, OIGs, law enforcement, working groups and task forces, to protect federal programs and our communities and promote efficiencies in federal programs.

OIGs can be instrumental in helping to ensure program integrity across the government by engaging with their agencies to promote accountability, to include sharing leading practices and internal controls, developing joint anti-fraud training and outreach, and enhancing the use of administrative remedies to protect programs government-wide. In addition, OIGs coordinate with external stakeholders to benchmark leading practices, identify duplication and overlapping programs, engage in joint proactive initiatives, develop resources to highlight common fraud indicators and lessons learned, and offer legislative and regulatory language to best protect federal programs.

If confirmed, I commit to continue to engage in activities such as the above to promote program integrity at the FCC and to protect broadband funding and other FCC programs from fraud, waste, and abuse.