

MICHAEL F. BENNET
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

FINANCE

INTELLIGENCE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

WASHINGTON, DC:
261 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5852

COLORADO:
CESAR E. CHAVEZ BUILDING
1244 SPEER BOULEVARD
DENVER, CO 80204
(303) 455-7600

<http://www.bennet.senate.gov>

April 14, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to express profound concern about your removal of the Department of Defense's Acting Inspector General, Glenn Fine, effectively blocking his service as incoming chair of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC). I urge you to reinstate him and do everything in your power to subject the new authorities in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to the highest degree of scrutiny and oversight.

Congress established the PRAC to promote transparency and accountability for the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act, the largest emergency spending bill in American history. This unprecedented level of funding, combined with the need to rapidly deliver said funds to those in need, raises obvious risks of waste, fraud, abuse, and favoritism. Rigorous and independent oversight is therefore essential to giving the American people confidence that their money is supporting a broad economic recovery by going to workers, families, small businesses, and historically overlooked communities in need, instead of the politically-connected. That is why Congress created the PRAC.

Mr. Fine was ideally suited to lead the PRAC. Before his termination, Mr. Fine brought to the position impeccable credentials and a distinguished career serving administrations of both parties. As Inspector General for the Department of Justice from 2000 to 2010 and Acting Inspector General for the Department of Defense from 2016 to 2020, Mr. Fine developed a bipartisan reputation for integrity and independence. Over his career, he led large, complex, and controversial investigations that exposed, among other things, violations of civil liberties and

ethics at the Department of Justice. It is one reason he was the longest-serving inspector general in the Department's history.

As with any oversight role, leadership of the PRAC is especially susceptible to undue influence – a concern made especially salient given the Administration's record of withholding taxpayer funds to advance personal, political goals. Mr. Fine's experience underscored his ability to manage investigations without succumbing to political pressure. It is why a consensus of federal inspectors general selected him for the position, as required by law.

Your decision to remove Mr. Fine, which came on the heels of decisions to remove the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community and to criticize the Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services over their report on testing shortages, sent a clear and chilling message across government: Those who raise fact-based concerns and truths within the administration will be silenced.

We cannot think of a message more at war with America's commitment to the rule of law and our constitutional checks and balances. Your decisions risk lasting damage, not only to the proper implementation of the largest emergency spending bill in U.S. history, but to the confidence of the American people in our government. To make matters worse, your statement after signing the CARES Act risks hindering the PRAC's ability to share timely information with Congress required for proper oversight.

We urge you to reinstate Mr. Fine, safeguard the PRAC's independence, and subject implementation of the CARES Act to the highest degree of scrutiny and oversight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Bennet". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator