

Good morning everybody. Thank you very much for coming here to join us for this important and much-awaited swearing-in to get our permanent Inspector General here. I want to welcome Mary, Zachary, Sarah, and Madeleine. We're delighted to have you all here—anything to get out of school, right? Nah, I'm joking.

I also want to welcome our current and former inspectors general, including Ambassador Harry Geisel, who has been doing a fantastic job serving as the interim [inspector general] for, clearly, much longer than he anticipated.

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously said that if the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for the law. And today, with confidence in government at record lows, obviously, I think we have to do more than just adhere to the law. We have to find ways to accomplish our goals as efficiently, as effectively, as transparently, as cost-effectively, as possible. And we have to serve the American people with the accountability and the dignity that they expect and deserve. We certainly have to do it absent a kind of arrogance and contempt that, sometimes, some offices at certain levels of government have been known to assume.

None of these goals come without hard work, and they don't come without effective people, leadership. They don't come without strong and effective oversight. And that's why, to me, it is not just a question of being a priority. It's really a necessity. It is essential to good governance to have good oversight and good accountability.

I haven't known Steve for a long time at all, but what I do know about him was enough to convince me, after a long and thorough search, that we have found the right person, if not the perfect person, to lead the Office of Inspector General. For starters, I know that he had the good sense to pursue a career as a prosecutor, and I say that, obviously, as a former prosecutor myself. But it tells me something more than just that commonality. It tells me that he is someone who understands the law, the foibles of human nature, and the means by which you investigate within the law, appropriately. He understands that you have to follow the facts, wherever they lead you. And he understands how to uncover waste, fraud, and abuse, and how to remedy those same things. And he understands how important it is to be ethical, fair, and objective in the work that he does.

I also know that after his time as a federal prosecutor, he undoubtedly got a slew of attractive offers to go out and take a cushy job at any number of law firms around town. But he didn't. Instead he's used his unique skills to help address some of the country's most pressing problems. In the midst of the housing crisis, Steve chose to serve at the Federal Housing Finance Agency as the agency's first inspector general. And today, in what is perhaps the most complex time in history for American foreign policy, he has now chosen to join us here at State at a time where, obviously, resources are constrained and accountability is important. And what that tells me is that his commitment to public service is as deep as it is genuine.

Finally, I also know that he is good at what he does. During his time as IG at FHFA, his office published dozens and dozens of reports and management alerts on topics that alerted the U.S. housing market. And the recommendations that Steve and his team made are now going to yield at least \$2 billion in added recoveries for the agency. And the criminal and civil investigations that they pursued have helped put a number of people who were committing mortgage fraud behind bars, which is where they belonged.

What that tells me is that he takes the role of IG seriously. He knows how to make tough decisions, and he doesn't shy away from getting his hands dirty in the process of working hard to produce results. And that's the kind of person that we need in this role.

After spending 28 years in the United States Senate—where I led investigative oversight committee efforts for everything from money-laundering in Latin America that exposed Manuel Noriega and his engagement in narcotics rings, to the illicit dealings of the BCCI Bank, where we first uncovered the name of Osama Bin Laden and other criminal networks—it is something that I understand, this whole effort of working toward transparency of things like foreign aid, climate change policies, and other things. And I appreciate how difficult implementing oversight can be. It's less daunting when you have cooperation from the parties.

And I want to be clear to the Department when I say today: Steve, you will always have my cooperation and the cooperation of my team. The Office of Inspector General is not, in my judgment, a thorn in the side of the Department. And there were some who felt that we could do fine without an Inspector General; there are many people who fear the appointment of an inspector general. I don't. I welcome it. I believe it is a very important part of our efforts. In fact, I view the presence of a good inspector general not as a thorn in our side, but as the ace up our sleeve. This will help us be a better Department. It will help us be able to deliver better for the American people, and one of the things I've asked Steve in joining in this effort is, we'll be there to cooperate. We want the accountability, we want the transparency, we want to work cooperatively. We don't want to add to the great game of "gotcha" in Washington. We want to do what makes governing effective, and Steve will have a willing partner in that effort.

So I welcome the audits, the inspections, the investigations, and I encourage Steve to bring any and all issues to my attention so we can improve the way we serve the American people. That is why we are here. It is not an office that belongs to us. It's an office that we hold in trust for the American people. And that is the attitude with which we will approach this collaborative effort with a new inspector general.

So, on behalf of President Obama, and the entire State Department, I congratulate Steve on his appointment, I thank him for his willingness to serve. It is now my honor to administer the Oath of Office and make this official.