passed a historic piece of bipartisan legislation that will put an end to the flawed Medicare sustainable growth rate, the so-called doc fix, and extend the Children's Health Insurance Program.

For more than a decade, Congress has used a bandaid to address the sustainable growth rate, rather than offering permanent reforms. Having served in a nonprofit health care setting for nearly three decades, I experienced firsthand the uncertainty and the anxiety that patients and their providers experienced annually, wondering if draconian cuts to reimbursements would occur. This bipartisan, permanent solution will replace the sustainable growth rate with a more stable system that will ensure our seniors do not lose access to their healthcare providers.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is by no means perfect, but it is a move in the right direction for children, seniors, and our medical providers.

VOTING RIGHTS

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, we just passed a bipartisan bill that addressed an issue, as the previous speaker said, that needed to be addressed.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court handed down a decision in Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama which ought to give every Member pause regarding the position that Federal voting protections are no longer needed to ensure that all Americans can register and vote.

The Court found that Alabama legislators may have drawn congressional districts after the last census in a manner that diluted the voting strength of African American citizens. The Court raised disturbing questions, Mr. Speaker, about how African Americans are represented in Alabama's congressional districts and returned the case to a lower court for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we are a nation that prides itself on its unflinching willingness to confront its sins of segregation and voter suppression that kept millions of Americans from participating equally for generations.

On the same day the Court ruled, we marked the 50th anniversary of the Selma marchers finally reaching Montgomery. Such anniversaries are reminders of how much—or how little progress—we have made to realize the principles and rights embodied in our Constitution.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I urge us to proceed, as we did today, in a bipartisan fashion to restore the Voting Rights Act to its full force and effect to protect all Americans. And I urge my colleagues to work together to bring the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendment Act to the floor and restore the full power of the Voting Rights Act without delay.

We acted in a bipartisan fashion today. Let's do it tomorrow on the Voting Rights Act.

BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Brain Awareness Week.

Last week, neuroscientists from around the world reached out to students and the public with educational activities that helped illustrate the wonders of the human brain. Since 1996, organizations around the world have come together during Brain Awareness Week to inform us about brain research and brain awareness, about brain disorders and diseases that affect nearly 100 million Americans.

The National Science Foundation has supported a number of projects that have led to discoveries in neuroscience. These projects include gene editing that allows scientists to understand the biological origins of complex brain disorders and provide new potential treatments. On another front, increasing the resolution of optical microscopes has allowed scientists to view the brain in more detail and helped them understand Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Brain Awareness Week and to support researchers in their own districts who are working to improve public health worldwide.

HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, we just witnessed an opportunity that should not be singular, and that is the coming together of Members of the United States Congress to address some very important issues.

I have already spoken on the importance of providing for the Children's Health Insurance Program that this legislation, H.R. 2, has provided for and securing Medicare for our seniors and ensuring funding for our federally qualified health clinics, the very clinics that I advocated for so many years ago. And we have seen a growth in them. The ones that are in my congressional district, they opened their doors to low-income and those without insurance in years past.

We are trying to get in front of the issue and the crisis of health care in America. But I want to make sure that as we pass this legislation, we do not forget physician-owned hospitals, which are prevalent in the State of Texas, and there are many in my neighborhood. These are doctors who have sacrificed to open the doors of hospitals in low-income areas. It is important for CMS to make sure that their applications are expeditiously and efficiently reviewed and that they have the opportunity to expand. This is language that we have put into the Affordable Care Act so the doors of these hospitals can remain open to the sick and those who are in neighborhoods where access to health care is not strong.

I ask my colleagues to continue to push forward on good health care in America and to help physician-owned hospitals in the way that they should be under the Affordable Care Act.

REMEMBERING MARY EDWARDS

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a longtime friend, Mary Edwards, a State Democratic executive committeewoman and board member for Tarrant County Stonewall Democrats.

Mary was born in Clarksville, a little town next to Paris, and moved to Fort Worth with her family when she was a kid.

She dedicated her time to helping others and making a difference to anyone she came across. I can personally attest to the leadership and activism she displayed throughout the years in the Fort Worth community, as well as when she worked alongside longtime former State Representative Lon Burnam.

Mary also served in various roles in the community. She was very active in the LGBT community and was very proud of her work. She was also a member of the Communications Workers of America. And she was very active in the neighborhood that she lived in.

My heartfelt sympathies goes out to her younger brother, Longe, and her niece, whom she greatly adored.

I can tell you, personally, that it is going to be sad to go to the Democratic meetings and pull up into the parking lot and not see Mary's big red truck there. But I can attest to you that while Mary was here, on this side, she did everything she could to make life better for others and truly, truly cared for the community.

MISCONDUCT OF INSPECTOR GENERAL TODD ZINSER, COMMERCE DEPARTMENT

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Congress relies upon inspectors general, IGs, as a key component of the Federal accountability community. When IGs themselves engage in illegal, unethical, or inappropriate behavior, Congress has an obligation to investigate them.

In the last Congress, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology launched a bipartisan investigation of

the Department of Commerce Inspector General Todd Zinser. The evidence the committee obtained regarding Mr. Zinser's personal misconduct and professional mismanagement of his office is overwhelming.

Any one of the multiple issues highlighted in my extended remarks would be sufficient to justify the removal of this IG. This serious step is made necessary by the abundant and deeply disturbing evidence that I am making public today. It gives me no pleasure to provide this account to the Congress, but I believe it is my obligation to report on what we have found.

Todd J. Zinser has been the Inspector General of the Department of Commerce (DOC) since December 2007. Prior to his present post, he served as Acting IG and Deputy IG at the Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General (OIG). He has had a thirty year career in the federal accountability community.

Our Committee relies on the Commerce IG's office to identify and investigate issues of waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement within agencies under the Committee's jurisdiction, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which encompasses the National Weather Service (NWS) and National Hurricane Center, as well as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Committee also has wide-ranging oversight jurisdiction over all non-military research and development, which touches upon other components of the Department of Commerce.

Issues relating to Mr. Zinser's conduct in office first came to the attention of the Committee in 2012. As some of you may recall, the Chief Financial Officer at the National Weather Service was removed after it was found that he had established an improper and illegal process for moving tens of millions of dollars across appropriated accounts at NWS in violation of the Anti-deficiency Act. Subsequently, the then-head of the NWS also retired as a result of this scandal. The Committee learned of this improper conduct the same way the rest of the world did: we read about it in the Washington Post on May 28, 2012.

However, Inspector Generals are required by the Inspector General Act to notify Congress when they become aware of significant problems in their agency. The Inspector General Act of 1978 as amended says very clearly that it is a purpose of the establishment of inspector generals that they are ''to provide a means for keeping the head of the establishment and the Congress fully and currently informed about problems and deficiencies relating to the administration of'' that agency.

That act also directs that ''[e]ach Inspector General shall report immediately to the head of the establishment involved whenever the Inspector General becomes aware of particularly serious or flagrant problems, abuses, or deficiencies relating to the administration of programs and operations of such establishment. The head of the establishment shall transmit any such report to the appropriate committees or subcommittees of Congress within seven calendar days, together with a report by the head of the establishment containing any comments such head deems appropriate.'' Mr. Zinser never suggested that he had followed this provision and there is no evidence that the IG ever communicated any report to the Secretary of Commerce regarding ongoing violations of the Anti-deficiency Act within the National Weather Service.

In this case, Mr. Zinser did not notify our Committee by any means that NWS had been running a huge, illegal accounting scam. That failure to notify came as a grave disappointment to me and to other Members of the Committee. When staff met with Mr. Zinser to understand what had happened in this case, and the role of his office in the investigation, they were astonished to learn that in November 2011 the IG had concluded that a violation of the Anti-deficiency Act had likely occurred. That meant that the IG went six months without mentioning this significant matter to the Congress, letting us instead learn of the issue in the press.

In that meeting with staff, Mr. Zinser disclosed that he had no idea that his office had received multiple tips regarding financial misconduct at NWS. He admitted that his office had actually misplaced some of these allegations. The Commerce OIG received its first of several Hotline complaints about this issue in June 2010. Mr. Zinser also claimed he had no idea that his audit staff were conducting an examination of these allegations until a memorandum on the topic—eleven months in the making—hit his desk on November 18, 2011. It seemed impossible that, with his years of experience, he would have established a system for receiving whistleblower tips that could actually lose those tips. It also seemed impossible that he could not know that his staff was conducting a ''preliminary audit'' on matters involving possible illegal activity by one of the top officials at the NWS.

At the time, his office only had about 120 employees and misconduct at the National Weather Service would be a very, very high profile matter. Even if Mr. Zinser's account is true—and my staff have gathered significant evidence that Mr. Zinser is actually a micromanager who has been personally involved in assignments of hotline complaints and held weekly reviews of ongoing work at the time, back in 2011—such failings suggest an extraordinary lack of personal engagement in the work of his office and a serious lack of competence in Mr. Zinser's management of significant, potentially criminal, allegations.

Most surprising of all the things staff learned in this meeting was that Mr. Zinser declined to conduct a formal investigation into these financial improprieties even after he said he became aware of them. Instead, the IG gave the investigation back to the agency. Given the vast scope of the financial shenanigans that occurred at NWS over many years, it is reasonable to question whether others in the agency knew about this conduct or played some role in allowing it to go on. In letting the agency essentially investigate itself on this violation of the law, the IG created a situation where there could have been a cover-up. In the end, the agency's report on this incident found only one official—the NWS Chief Financial Officer—to have been responsible for years of illegal accounting practices.

IGs exist to carry out investigations precisely when allegations of illegal activity have been made. Members and staff found it impossible to understand why the IG had failed in what can only be described as a ''core responsibility'' to investigate this misconduct and to keep the Congress informed. My staff has posed this scenario to several other IGs who work at agencies in our jurisdiction, every one of them has said they would never have given such an investigation back to the agency. Such a decision is inexplicable.

These failures to investigate a violation of law, to inform the Congress of significant issues at his agency, or to effectively manage his own office led to doubts among Committee Members regarding Mr. Zinser's reliability as an IG. As a result, our staff began to examine the work of Mr. Zinser's office in more detail.

Let me be clear: Mr. Zinser came to our attention because of Mr. Zinser's own misconduct. We know from sources on other Committees as well as correspondence he has sent, that he has tried to explain away our interest in his conduct as the result of former IG staff with an ax to grind coming to us with false stories, or even that my own Committee staff are personally hostile to Mr. Zinser. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mr. Zinser has only himself to blame for drawing our attention to him.

In the wake of a hearing in which Members heard directly from Mr. Zinser regarding his mishandling of the NWS Anti-Deficiency Act violations, my staff began looking into the IG's hotline system. How could tips involving illegal activity and the potential waste of millions of dollars get set aside without any action? While the staff and Members were wondering how this bizarre conduct on the NWS could be explained, another item in the Washington Post caught our eye. Mr. Zinser's office was the subject of a whistleblower retaliation complaint that had been taken up by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC)—the Federal government's whistleblower protection office.

On December 3, 2012 the Washington Post reported on this case because the OSC had to take the extraordinary step of issuing instructions that Inspector General Zinser vacate a gag agreement with the complainants. This gag agreement, which OSC ultimately found had been essentially extorted from the complainants, had barred them from communicating about their experiences in Mr. Zinser's office to the press, OSC or Congress.

This press account was every bit as shocking as the revelations Mr. Zinser had made to the Committee regarding his mishandling of the NWS case. It seemed impossible that an IG, or his top aides, would establish a gag order to silence former staff from talking to the press, the OSC, or Congress. That such a gag order was the result of retaliation for suspected whistleblowing conduct by the former employees made this situation even more disturbing. By law, IG offices are to be a safe haven for whistleblowers. That an IG, or his senior staff, would attempt to punish and silence whistleblowers within their own office flies in the face of everything we expect of an IG.

This story opened up new lines of communication between whistleblowers remaining in Mr. Zinser's office and our staff. For the remainder of the 113th Congress we worked to understand how the office operated and why so many problems seemed to emerge from the IG's office. Over time, this initiative expanded from work done solely by the Minority staff of the Committee to become a fully bipartisan investigation with participation by the Majority as well. My friend from Wisconsin, the then-Vice Chairman of the Committee, Representative SENSENBRENNER, was particularly

important in driving the investigation forward and forging a bipartisan effort. Mr. SENSENBRENNER has a long history of taking action to protect whistleblowers.

I want to touch on some of the most outrageous things that we uncovered during the two years of our work. I may depart from a chronological treatment in an effort to bring the most disturbing elements to the attention of the House in the most expeditious way.

For those who wonder how I know what I am saying is true, let me share a summary of the work our staff engaged in.

The staff interviewed more than 70 officials who have worked for or with Mr. Zinser, including more than 60 current or former Commerce OIG employees. The Committee has also obtained thousands of pages of supporting documentation, court records and other evidence from informed sources. Most of the material that has informed our investigation has come to the staff through whistleblowers sharing materials. Despite two bipartisan document request letters in the last Congress, Mr. Zinser provided very little responsive material, particularly to our second request in August 2014 that specifically focused on the conduct of Mr. Zinser and some of his senior most officials targeting whistleblowers in his own office.

Coincidentally, and I will discuss this in more detail later, six days—let me repeat, six days—after Mr. Zinser received the Committee's bipartisan document request regarding efforts to identify and retaliate against whistleblowers in his office, he was seen using his personal hand-cart to remove two bankers boxes of materials from his office to his car on a holiday weekend. Although we don't know what was in those boxes, the timing of this removal is extremely suspicious.

Committee staff has built a network of sources that provided accurate, contemporaneous insights into actions within the office. The stories and documents these whistleblowers provided paint a deeply disturbing picture of an IG's office ruled by fear and intimidation, where unethical conduct is rewarded at the top, while the line staff are largely prevented from conducting the good work expected of an IG's office.

Let me start by acknowledging two apparent public successes of Mr. Zinser's: he produced two reports in 2014 on misconduct at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) that received extensive press coverage and inspired a joint hearing by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the House Judiciary Committee. Each of these seeming successes, though, points to core problems in the credibility of Mr. Zinser and the work of his office.

On July 8, 2014, Mr. Zinser's office released an investigative report about the conduct of Deborah Cohn, the Commissioner for Trademarks at PTO. The report found that Commissioner Cohn violated several federal laws regarding federal officials using their public office for an individual's private gain (5 C.F.R. 2635.702 and 702(a)), providing preferential treatment to an applicant (5 U.S.C. 2302(b), and 5 C.F.R. 2635.101(b)(8)), and violating federal ethics violations (5 C.F.R. 2635.501(a)). What was Ms. Cohn's offense? She had intervened in a hiring decision to assist her daughter's fiancé in getting a job.

In September, in the wake of the report, Deborah Cohn announced plans to retire by the end of 2014. According to her online biography, she worked at PTO for over 30 years, and retired in January, 2015. At the time of the release of the report, IG Zinser was quoted in the press as saying the OIG investigation found Ms. Cohn exerted ''undue influence in the hiring process'' and ''intervened and created an additional position specifically for the applicant.'' The Commerce OIG report also said that beyond the letter of the law, the PTO official's actions ''reflected poor judgment.'' The take away quote for the press: ''As a long-term senior manager in the federal government, she should have known about the federal laws governing hiring and should have steered clear of any appearance of impropriety,'' the report said.

Ms. Cohn was wrong to have intervened in this hiring case in the manner that she did, but she is to be congratulated for choosing to retire in the face of these significant findings that called her judgement into question. But as my staff learned, Mr. Zinser is really not in a very credible position to lecture anyone on hiring irregularities.

Mr. Zinser has his own rather astounding record of inappropriate hiring in the Commerce IG's office. For example, since coming to the IG post in December of 2007, he personally intervened to save the career of one of his closest friends as it was imploding at the Department of Transportation due to mismanagement issues. This person is one of the same people who ultimately had the OSC complaint lodged against him that I referenced above. Mr. Zinser also personally intervened to get his own son's friend an internship position in the OIG and then directed his senior staff to push the Department of Commerce Security Office to issue credentials for the young man when a security issue arose. The friend of Mr. Zinser's son was eventually hired into a permanent position in the OIG with a starting salary of more than $42,000.

Most disturbingly, Mr. Zinser hired a woman that substantial evidence and witness testimony reveals was involved in a ''romantic'' relationship with Mr. Zinser at the time he hired her in August 2010. At that time, she was in the middle of her probationary year as a candidate for the Senior Executive Service (SES) at an office within the Department of Commerce. Notified by her managers that she would be removed from her SES probationary position immediately due to significant conduct problems, she asked her supervisor if she could have an extra day because ''Todd Zinser'' would hire her. Mr. Zinser then personally intervened to have her detailed to his office within days. This required a frantic push among all levels of his office to get the paperwork done and signed before her SES position at DOC was vacated—which would have washed her out of the SES probationary program.

Witnesses in the Commerce IG's office who had been involved in the transfer say there was an extreme, personal urgency in Mr. Zinser's actions to have this employee detailed to his office. In addition, the Committee has confirmed that Mr. Zinser never contacted this woman's former supervisors at the other DOC agency where she worked to ascertain why she was in the process of being removed from her SES position. This would seem to have been a reasonable action for anyone hiring a person into an SES position, even more so for an IG who routinely handles sensitive personal information and criminal investigations.

The morning before the Department of Commerce ''officially'' approved her detail to the IG's office, she was provided with a window office, desk, computer and phone in the Commerce Office of Inspector General, according to former OIG employees and contemporaneous emails. In the wake of this effort, the then-Director of Human Resources in the IG's office e-mailed the Counsel to the IG: ''you can add illegal appointments to my annual performance discussion. With [Todd's son's friend] and this one, I am going to be an entire series in the Washington post [sic].''

Within five weeks of being brought to the OIG on detail, Mr. Zinser appointed his friend to the position of Assistant Inspector General for Administration—a SES position that paid $150,000 a year. Subsequently, Mr. Zinser directly approved three SES Performance Bonuses for her from January 2011 to October 2012 totaling $28,199.

Let me be clear, I am not making any comment on the qualifications or skills of the woman hired by Mr. Zinser, and I am attempting to limit my comments about the broader situation of their relationship out of sensitivity for the feelings of innocent parties. However, Mr. Zinser's personal conduct in this case is deplorable. His conduct undermined the integrity of the SES process and the Federal hiring system more generally.

It is clear that he hired this intimate friend to do her a favor given her difficult professional circumstances. No one interviewed by the Committee staff who worked in the IG's office at the time of her detail or subsequent appointment believes that she was hired because there was a pressing need for someone with her skill set. The universal reaction among the staff was that this behavior was highly irregular, and right from the beginning there were some in the office who had knowledge of his relationship with this person. The result was that rumors began immediately regarding this person's special status. Witnesses indicate she wielded unusual authority in the office due to the close nature of her relationship to Mr. Zinser. This is the kind of personnel action that destroys the effectiveness of an organization and that IGs themselves often investigate.

The Committee has no more interest in Mr. Zinser's private affairs than the Congress would have in Ms. Cohn's daughter's fiancé. However, Todd Zinser just as blatantly entangled his personal affairs with his public duties as Ms. Cohn had done when he used his position of trust to advance a romantic partner's position. This has created not simply ethically troubling behavior on his part but potential violations of federal law. His actions to further the career of a romantic interest compromises the credibility of the IG and his office to investigate inappropriate hiring by others, even when justified.

Mr. Zinser's press comment about Ms. Cohn applies to him as well: ''As a long-term senior manager in the federal government, (h)e should have known about the federal laws governing hiring and should have steered clear of any appearance of impropriety.'' It should go without saying that such a statement is even more true of a person who the Congress has placed in a law enforcement position. The difference between Cohn and Zinser is that there is no IG to hold Mr. Zinser

accountable. That is a job for the Congress and the President.

There is one more twist in this tale. In January 2011, an anonymous complaint about Mr. Zinser's inappropriate hiring of the Assistant IG for Administration was received by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). The complaint went to their Integrity Committee to investigate. On February 22, 2011, CIGIE's Integrity Committee wrote to Mr. Zinser regarding the complaint asking that he respond within 30 days. On April 11, 2011, Mr. Zinser provided a written response completely denying that there was anything improper in his hiring of this woman. He told CIGIE that he had a critical need to hire someone with her skills. In the letter Mr. Zinser wrote, ''. . . her assignment was based solely on business necessity, not on a personal relationship.''

As I mentioned, no one interviewed by Committee staff who worked in the Commerce IG's office at the time believes she was hired because there was a pressing need for someone with her skill set. The position of Assistant IG for Administration had been vacant in the Commerce OIG for over two years before it was given to Mr. Zinser's romantic interest, and numerous former OIG employees recall that Zinser had refused to fill that position on a number of occasions claiming he did not see a need for it. Not until his close friend was in desperate need of a job did Mr. Zinser discover a necessity to fill the post.

In addition, not a single record provided by the Commerce IG in response to our Committee's July 2014 document request regarding records related to Mr. Zinser's hiring of this person supports IG Zinser's declaration to CIGIE that he hired her into the position of Assistant IG for Administration ''based solely on business necessity, not a personal relationship.'' There is no contemporaneous record confirming that Mr. Zinser had been pushing for filling that position prior to the quick detail of his intimate friend to the office.

In his written response to CIGIE, Mr. Zinser acknowledged that he did have a personal relationship with his new Assistant Inspector General for Administration, and that they were ''avid long distance runners and trained together on a fairly regular basis.'' ''Contrary to the insinuations of the anonymous complaint,'' he wrote, ''our relationship is neither romantic nor sexual in nature,'' and while he said there are no rules ''against maintaining personal friendships with colleagues or subordinates, to minimize any potential appearance of impropriety, we curtailed our running together'' after she came to his office. It may be true that their running relationship was ''curtailed'', but the staff has convincing evidence that other aspects of their relationship, more pertinent to the allegation, continued outside of the work place after her hiring and were ongoing at the time of the CIGIE inquiry.

In his response Mr. Zinser also suggested to CIGIE that the anonymous complaint they received was from his friend's husband who was attempting to use the complaint ''as a tool to gain advantage in divorce proceedings.'' It is true that this woman's husband filed for divorce in March 2011—the divorce was granted in January 2012—but it is not true that her now-former husband was the source of the CIGIE complaint. Despite Zinser's speculation, designed to throw the CIGIE Integrity Committee off his trail, Committee staff has spoken at length on multiple occasions to the individual who filed the anonymous complaint. The complainant is a person in the IG community not related to either Zinser's girlfriend or her former husband. This counter-allegation by Mr. Zinser fits with a long pattern of behavior he has displayed in trying to deflect criticism or questions by making assertions about the motivations or integrity of those who question or challenge him.

As to the relationship between Mr. Zinser and his Assistant IG for Administration, The Washington Post asked Mr. Zinser about it for an article they wrote about him on July 17, 2014. According to that article, ''Zinser said there was nothing improper about him hiring a highly qualified manager who was a close personal friend. He said the romantic nature of their relationship predated her coming to work for him.'' Mr. Zinser seems to have forgotten that he told CIGIE that there was no romantic element to their relationship.

The combination of misleading claims Mr. Zinser made to CIGIE regarding both his relationship with the close friend he hired and the ''business'' necessity of hiring her into his office appears to be an intentionally false narrative spun by Mr. Zinser to cover up his own unethical behavior. CIGIE's Integrity Committee accepted Mr. Zinser's explanation on April 28, 2011 and closed the complaint without further investigation. The Integrity Committee was operating in the dark regarding the extensive evidence my own Committee's staff has obtained that this hiring was improper and that Mr. Zinser was misleading them as to the real facts of his conduct.

What have we learned from this case? That Mr. Zinser has corrupted the Federal hiring process and the Senior Executive Service appointment process. That Mr. Zinser was willing to make false allegations about another to avoid having to answer for his own actions. That Mr. Zinser was willing to mislead the Integrity Committee of CIGIE, a body established to investigate questionable activities or mismanagement of IGs. That Mr. Zinser was willing to lecture another senior official for conduct that is no more disturbing than his own. All in all, this does not sound like the conduct we should expect from an Inspector General. We also have learned that Ms. Cohn was willing to act with accountability for her actions—she retired in the wake of the IG's report—while Mr. Zinser clings to his position in the face of substantial evidence that he is not fit to serve.

The second 2014 PTO report by the DOC IG's office to capture public attention involved abuse of time and attendance practices. In July 2014, the DOC OIG released a report entitled, ''Review of Waste and Mismanagement at the Patent Trial and Appeal Board,'' OIG Case 13–1077–I, U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, July 28 2014. In a memorandum dated the same day, Zinser wrote to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property regarding their findings. Mr. Zinser's summary of findings said, ''Our investigation uncovered waste in the PTAB that persisted for more than four years (2009–13) and resulted in the misuse of federal resources totaling more than $5 million. The bulk of the wasted resources related to PTAB's paralegals, who had insufficient workloads and considerable idle time during those years.''

According to the July 2014 OIG report as many as 95% of the PTAB paralegals were involved in the PTO's Patent Hoteling Program (PHP), the agency's largest telework program.

This apparent successful report takes on a different light when one realizes that in February 2012 the Commerce OIG released an audit of the PTO's Patent Hoteling Program that labelled it a great success. The title of the IG's audit report, ''The Patent Hoteling Program Is Succeeding as a Business Strategy,'' and news headlines at the time reporting on the IG's findings described how the IG audit praised the PTO's telework program: ''Teleworking PTO employees process more patents, less expensive,'' declared one headline.

It is difficult to know how auditors from the IG's office could have so completely missed the signs of waste, fraud and abuse that have now been widely identified in this program. Just as hard to explain is why Mr. Zinser initially turned these allegations over to the agency to investigate, just as he had in the NWS financial misconduct case. Again, there may have been violations of law, and the sums of money involved were not insignificant.

On November 18, 2014 the House Oversight and Government Reform and Judiciary Committees held a joint congressional hearing about the PTO's telework program. During his sworn testimony Mr. Zinser was asked by my friend, Ms. Lofgren of California, why his office turned the PTAB investigation back to the PTO. His response was because ''none of those allegations made specific allegations against specific individuals that would warrant us opening up a criminal investigation,'' he said.

Mr. Zinser's statement was not accurate, however. One complaint that the IG's office received on its Hotline in February 2013 identified ONE DOZEN specific individuals at the U.S. Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB) by name, including the chief judge of the Board and two administrators, who were knowingly approving non-production time of PTO employees, according to the allegation. Despite the fact that ''specific allegations'' were made ''against specific individuals'' this complaint was referred to PTO by the Commerce OIG, which requested PTO conduct an administrative inquiry.

The Committee has learned that the PTO did a thorough evaluation of the PTAB time and attendance issues, substantiated the allegations, concluded that there were problems with time and attendance reporting, and that steps should be taken to clean up the system with significant savings possible.

The IG's staff received the PTO's audit report of the PTAB time and attendance issues, and senior leadership at the IG's office realized they could not claim the significant monetary savings, in the millions of dollars, associated with the PTO report because they can only claim savings associated with their own work. To attempt to take credit for those savings, the OIG launched an audit that re-did the PTO's work. That OIG report was released in July 2014 and received widespread media coverage with story titles such as ''IG uncovers substantial waste at USPTO, says paralegals 'paid to do nothing,' '' and ''This May Be The Worst Abuse of Federal Telework Ever.'' Thus, to claim savings already identified by the agency, the IG wasted staff time and resources on a repetitive audit, and then worked the press to claim the credit for finding the

problem. All this while conveniently forgetting that nearly 2½ years earlier, the IG was praising the very same telework program that he later said had wasted money during that same time period.

What does this case teach us? That Mr. Zinser was willing to spend taxpayer dollars to get the credit for saving taxpayer dollars. It also shows that he was willing to mislead a senior Member of the House regarding why he had initially passed on carrying out this investigation. Finally, Mr. Zinser promised to provide documentation in response to Ms. Lofgren's questions, but in his submission for the record he went back on that promise by saying he would only provide those materials if he received a letter from the Chairman of the Committee.

Identifying savings is important for this IG because, on balance, Mr. Zinser is one of the least productive IGs in the federal government. According to the GAO, which is working to report on this office's productivity based on my request, the average Cabinet-level IGs recovered $22.64 for each dollar they spent from 2011 to 2013. By comparison, the Commerce OIG recovered just $4.18 for each dollar it spent. In addition, 95% of the Commerce OIG's savings came from joint investigations with other federal law enforcement agencies, and so much of these savings were claimed on work that may have been led by another IG or office.

Now, let me return to the story that gave additional momentum to our investigative activities: the fate of the whistleblower retaliation case before OSC. As I said, I learned of that case through reading of it in the press in December of 2012. Much of my staff's subsequent work was about getting more information regarding that case, which was being investigated by OSC. Everyone in this institution knows that the Congress relies on whistleblowers to do our oversight work. IGs are in the same position: they must be trusted by whistleblowers or they will not learn of problems in their agency. Congress feels so strongly about this that there is an entire section in the IG Act, Section 7, which addresses the role of IGs in receiving allegations and in protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. The idea that senior officials in the IG's office would retaliate against whistleblowers is inconceivable, but that is what the OSC case suggested happened in Mr. Zinser's office.

To its credit, OSC worked that case very, very diligently. The OSC issued a report in September 2013 that found Mr. Zinser's two closest aides—his legal counsel and the Principal Assistant Inspector General for Investigations and Whistleblower Protection—had engaged in what amounted to a coordinated effort to gag whistleblowers in the IG's own office from reporting misconduct to the OSC, the Congress or the press.

The OSC's ''Report on Prohibited Personnel Practices'' concluded: ''In this matter, OSC's investigation uncovered willful, concerted acts of retaliation that necessitate disciplinary action. Holding management accountable for engaging in prohibited personnel practices is essential to assuring employees that they can blow the whistle or engage in other protected activity without fear of reprisal.''

According to the OSC report: ''The record is also replete with evidence establishing that PAIGI [Rick] Beitel retaliated against the whistleblowers by drafting their unfounded failing interim performance appraisals. . . . The evidence demonstrates that PAIGI Beitel was motivated to retaliate against the whistleblowers for their engagement in protected activity and/or their perceived whistleblowing. . . . PAIGI Beitel's behavior is particularly egregious based on his position as the OIG's expert on whistleblower protection,'' the OSC determined.

While the OSC could find no ''documentary evidence'' that Mr. Zinser was involved in the case, every member of Mr. Zinser's staff that the Committee staff has spoken with who had experience of Mr. Zinser's management practices indicates that he rarely writes his directions down, instead relying on face-to-face meetings and oral directions. These witnesses also indicate that the PAIGI, Mr. Beitel, would never act on something this significant without clearing it with the IG. This is the same close, personal friend whose career Mr. Zinser saved by bringing him in from the Department of Transportation. The two had worked together since the early 1990s and were perceived by staff across both IG offices to have a very close working relationship of a mentor and mentee. In court documents unrelated to their federal employment Rick Beitel acknowledged that Todd Zinser was his ''close friend and personal confidant'' and that they routinely socialize with one another outside of work.

Mr. Zinser took no significant steps to punish either his good friend Rick Beitel or the other Commerce OIG official after receiving the OSC report. As a result of the OSC investigation and findings IG Zinser agreed to take twelve minimal actions, including the destruction of the coerced ''interim performance appraisals'' the whistleblowers were forced into signing, Mr. Beitel was removed from ''supervisory'' duties for one year, both officials were required to take ''performance counseling,'' and the Commerce OIG was required to hire an ''employee relations'' specialist.

But two officials who had used their position to threaten to destroy the professional careers of whistleblowers if they did not agree to gag orders denying them access to the Congress or the OSC should really not be in senior leadership positions in any office of the government, and especially not in an IG's office. That is my strong view, and I am not alone in thinking so.

After receiving a copy of this report and learning that no significant punishment had been meted out by Mr. Zinser, all seven Members of our Subcommittee on Oversight—four Republicans and three Democrats—wrote to Mr. Zinser on April 1, 2014. The real driving force in pushing this letter was my friend, Mr. Sensenbrenner. The letter said that Mr. Zinser should ''immediately terminate'' the two senior Commerce OIG officials who were found by OSC to have engaged in prohibited personnel practices against whistleblowers in his office.

Mr. Zinser responded on April 15, 2014, expressing doubts about the credibility of OSC's work and the legal basis for their findings. Incredibly, Mr. Zinser reiterated all of the knowingly inaccurate claims about the whistleblowers—essentially repeating the lies that OSC had found Mr. Beitel to have concocted to damage their careers and reputations. OSC thoroughly documented those claims to be inappropriate, misleading and simply false. Nevertheless, Mr. Zinser knowingly used those false claims again, further defaming his former employees.

This was not the first time Mr. Zinser had used these false, derogatory allegations to protect his office from tough questions. On January 7, 2013, Mr. Zinser wrote a 52 page letter to then Congressman Frank Wolf, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations. Mr. Wolf had raised questions regarding the OSC investigation that was then underway.

Mr. Zinser's letter defended the actions of his two top aides and reiterated the false allegations they had made against whistleblowers in the IG's office as if those claims were unshakable truths. For someone who claimed to OSC that he knew nothing about his aides' actions, Zinser seemed very comfortable defending their behavior and attacking the victims.

It is important to note that even after the OSC report found that there was no merit to any of these allegations, Mr. Zinser continued to leave his letter to Chairman Wolf up on his public web site, perpetuating false claims that defamed innocent former employees, and standing as a warning sign to other whistleblowers that their reputations were at risk should they challenge Mr. Zinser.

After this spirited defense of his closest staff and his refusal to take any noteworthy steps to punish them for their significant misdeeds even in the wake of OSCs findings, Mr. Zinser suddenly changed direction in August 2014 when he announced that both officials were to be placed on leave and a decision about termination would be made within 30 days. In the end, Mr. Zinser's legal counsel was terminated and his PAIGI—and close friend—was allowed to retire. This was a dramatic 180 degree turn from his previous public statements about the actions of these top aides.

Despite his outrageous conduct and botched management choices, Mr. Zinser was not found by OSC in their 2013 report to have known about the treatment of the whistleblowers. The OSC, however, was careful to say they found no ''documentary evidence'' regarding Mr. Zinser's knowledge of the actions of his two senior most staff. This lack of documentation saved him from any personal consequences as a result of the OSC report.

However, I believe it is important to tell my colleagues that Mr. Zinser had been named in a prior OSC report. That earlier report found he had personally engaged in retaliation against a whistleblower in his office. The similarities between the 1996 case and this 2013 case—both built around a concocted tissue of lies to remove or silence a whistleblower—are striking enough to suggest that perhaps OSC should have looked harder for evidence of Mr. ZinserIs involvement in the more recent case.

The Committee has uncovered a 1996 case in which Todd Zinser, then the Deputy Assistant IG for Investigations at the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General (DOT OIG), personally retaliated against Mr. John Deans. We have all the relevant filings and my staff has even spoken with Mr. Deans. Retired from law enforcement now, at the time of this case Mr. Deans was a former FBI agent working as a DOT OIG GS–12 Special Agent, criminal investigator. Deans was assigned to the Denver office, and while there he found what he believed to be compelling evidence that federal funding for the Denver International Airport was being illegally redirected to support local projects.

Deans briefed Mr. Zinser and two other DOT OIG officials on his case. Importantly, Deans suggested to others that very senior Federal officials may have been aware of this possible diversion of federal funds.

Mr. Zinser travelled to Denver a few days after he learned of Deans' comments about the potential knowledge of senior Federal officials regarding this alleged diversion. Soon after, Mr. Zinser flew to San Francisco to see if the Special-Agent-in-Charge (SAC) of the San Francisco office of the DOT OIG would be willing to have Deans detailed to his office. It is not clear what Zinser told the Special Agent in Charge about Deans but the Special Agent advised Zinser to have an ''impartial investigator'' look into the allegations against Deans. Instead, Mr. Zinser decided to investigate the Deans matter himself. Zinser had Mr. Deans transferred to San Francisco, then had him placed on administrative leave and ultimately had him fired.

In response to Mr. Zinser's actions, Deans appealed to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), which supported his complaint that this was retaliation for his work. OSC sought a stay of the transfer of Deans to San Francisco. On the same day the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) ordered that Mr. Deans be returned to his post in Denver, Mr. Zinser placed Deans on administrative leave.

Todd Zinser's behavior was considered so outlandish by the OSC that the Office filed a ''Petition for Enforcement'' against Todd Zinser with MSPB. OSC asked that, ''The [Merit Systems Protection] Board should order Zinser to immediately assign Deans the duties of his former GS–12 special agent, criminal investigator, position. Moreover . . . the Board should order that Todd Zinser not receive payment for service as an employee from May 23, 1996, until Deans is returned to his former position, i.e., until the agency complies with the Board's May 23, 1996, Opinion and Order.''

What did OSC think of the substance of the case Mr. Zinser had made against Deans to justify his actions? They thoroughly investigated Mr. Zinser's claims—reinterviewed witnesses, collected documents and deposed the principal players. OSC found, ''(A)s addressed in detail below, the evidence established that the specific charges that formed the basis for Deans' removal are unsupportable. . . . The evidence does not support any of these allegations. On the other hand, it is clear that Deans' removal was ordered at the behest of Deputy Assistant Inspector General (DAIG) for Investigations Tod[d] Zinser, who strongly objected to Deans' protected conduct.'' OSC investigators in 1996 concluded that Mr. Zinser's actions towards Deans were ''draconian in nature'' and ''motivated by animus.'' They determined Mr. Zinser took these actions because Deans ''discovered violations and politically embarrassing information about high-level government officials and community leaders.''

As a result of these findings against Mr. Zinser, Deans had to be rehired and restored to a post in Denver. Deans was repaid almost a year of back pay and benefits. On top of this, the government had to pay over $10,000 in Mr. Deans' attorney fees. In short, the taxpayer had to pay the bill for Mr. Zinser's outrageous and indefensible conduct towards this whistleblower.

Mr. Speaker, it is reasonable for Members to wonder how someone with this kind of history of abuse against a whistleblower could possibly have been confirmed by the Senate to the post of Inspector General. I wondered that too. It turns out, based on witness testimony and extant documents, that Mr. Zinser never disclosed the OSC case to either the White House or the Senate during his confirmation process.

The Senate routinely submits questionnaires to potential IGs with questions that must be filled out. That questionnaire asks about legal, ethical or other cases that the Committee should be aware of in considering his nomination. In response to that specific question Mr. Zinser wrote, ''I have never been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics.'' The questionnaire also asked: ''Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.'' Mr. Zinser wrote simply ''None.''

None? A potential IG does not think it is relevant to the confirmation process to acknowledge that he was found to have engaged in prohibited personnel practices? Mr. Zinser was asked by a Washington Post reporter why he did not disclose this case during his confirmation. In a story on Mr. Zinser published by the Washington Post on July 17, 2014, Mr. Zinser told the Post that he did not disclose the case because, ''I just never thought of myself as a subject [of the investigation], although maybe I was''.

More recently, in January 2015, Mr. Zinser responded to a Question For the Record (QFR) from my friend, Ms. LOFGREN, regarding the same matter. In that response, Mr. Zinser gave a lawyerly answer, ''it is my understanding that the subject [of the investigation] was the Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General.'' Technically that is true because under the law, cases filed with the OSC name the office that is responsible for the alleged misconduct, not the individual. Similarly, lawsuits filed against an agency name the head of the agency in their official capacity regardless of whether that official has any personal knowledge of the matter or not. However, this artful response suggests that the case had nothing to do with Mr. Zinser. Let me be clear: The case only existed because of Mr. Zinser's personal misconduct, and he was squarely the subject of the allegations of prohibited personnel practices.

The OSC's key document in the John Deans case—the OSC's ''request for stay''—refers to Todd Zinser BY NAME 53 separate times in a 26-page report. In addition, this document makes it exceedingly evident that Todd Zinser was the sole individual in the Department of Transportation IG's office who was believed to have retaliated against John Deans. Looking at the OSC records, it is evident that the Office found Mr. Zinser personally investigated Deans, personally constructed unsupported findings against Deans to be used to justify adverse employment actions, personally ordered those actions, and personally resisted setting things right when OSC and the MPRB ordered the DOT OIG to do so. Of all the employees at the DOT OIG's office, only Todd Zinser was singled out by OSC for punishment by way of seeking that his salary be withheld.

The 1996 case was specifically built on Mr. Zinser's misconduct just as the 2013 report by OSC is specifically about misconduct by Mr. Zinser's two closest (now former) aides. Had Mr. Zinser divulged his role in the Deans case at the time of his confirmation, it is highly unlikely he would have been confirmed as the Commerce Inspector General. The actions taken by Mr. Zinser in the John Deans case, and described in detail in the OSC documents, are all antithetical to the behavior and ethical grounding that the public deserves and that Congress expects of an Inspector General. He showed no remorse about his conduct at that time. Similarly, he showed no sympathy for the victims of his aides' abuse in 2013. His initial reaction to the 2013 report was to protect those officials from the consequences of their actions as documented in the OSC report. He maintained that position for months, even under pressure from the Committee on Science, Space & Technology where I am the Ranking Member.

For any IG to be associated with two whistleblower retaliation cases of this kind would be an indelible stain on their reputation. However, as my staff talked to more employees of the IG's office, we learned that these two cases do not mark the end of whistleblower retaliation at his office. We know of other recent instances of Mr. Zinser expressing his belief that specific individuals that he personally named were cooperating with our Committee or making protected complaints to OSC. We also know that these individuals were targeted in different ways for adverse actions in order to convince them to leave or to remove them from the office. Separately, one senior OIG official was placed on ''Administrative Leave'' immediately after they contacted the Office of Special Counsel. That individual has since left the IG's office for another federal agency. We also know that the current Deputy Inspector General had, as of several months ago, obtained and retained the entire email records of two former and one current high level IG staff, including two of her predecessors—all of whom were viewed by Mr. Zinser as disloyal to him or untrustworthy with the secrets of his office. One of those predecessors is a sitting, Senate-confirmed Inspector General at another Federal agency.

There is no legitimate reason to have collected and then retained the emails of those three senior staff, including two former Deputy IGs. There is certainly no justification for the current Deputy IG, widely viewed as being the closest current personal aide to Mr. Zinser, to be carrying those records on her laptop computer's hard drive. What would such records be used for? It is impossible to know, but we do know that there was a search and analysis of one of those former Deputy IG's email records. A memorandum was prepared based on that search documenting the exchanges between the former-Deputy and a woman who had applied for a position within the OIG, who was a family friend. Mr. Zinser was clearly aware of this relationship since the woman was a reference for the former Deputy IG who was called as a reference by Mr. Zinser when the former Deputy IC applied for his job.

Based on information obtained by Committee staff it seems clear that Mr. Zinser was simply searching for anything he might uncover in his former Deputy's emails that Mr. Zinser might be able to use against him, since the former Deputy had fallen out of favor with Mr. Zinser.

When employee emails are to be pulled, there is a policy in place at the DOC Office of Inspector General that requires Mr. Zinser to personally sign a memorandum to the Chief

Information Officer requesting specific materials be produced. This policy has been in place since October 2012. However, in the last year, in particular, this policy has been largely set aside, permitting other OIG staff in Mr. Zinser's chain of command to authorize the collection of Commerce OIG employees' e-mails invoking Zinser's authority and with his clear knowledge and, in some cases, specific direction but without his actual signature. That occurred in the case of the former Deputy IG.

The IT staff in the IG's office has had to comply with these requests even though they violate a policy Mr. Zinser himself put in place. This is an example of a long-standing issue in Mr. Zinser's management style—he establishes policies and then ignores or stretches them without any warning to those who work for him. This creates an environment where it is easy for the IG to claim someone has violated policy if he wants to punish them because the policy environment is constantly and mysteriously shifting.

The pulls of email records, the targeting of suspected whistleblowers, the adverse employee actions taken in retaliation for protected disclosures are all widely known and discussed by employees within the Department of Commerce OIG's office. We have heard from many whistleblowers that they fear that if Mr. Zinser is not removed, there will be—in the words of more than one of these individuals—''a bloodbath''—in the office. As soon as Mr. Zinser believes no one is looking, he will begin to take steps to invent allegations against individuals he wants to retaliate against—as he did against Mr. Deans and as his close aides did against OIG investigative staff in 2011—the case which led to the 2013 OSC report—and then take steps to remove them. People are frightened, and given Mr. Zinsers prior conduct they have good reason to fear him and his potential actions.

The last whistleblower issue I wish to raise, Mr. Speaker, is that Mr. Zinser has let his office fall out of compliance with the U.S. Code 33 specifically, 5 U.S. Code § 2302 (prohibited personnel practices). That provision establishes the Office of Special Counsel's (OSC's) 2302(c) Certification Program and requires that Federal agency managers participate in training regarding the rights of whistleblowers and their right to make protected disclosures.

Last year the White House directed agencies to take affirmative steps to complete the OSC certification program. According to the Commerce OIG's own web-site ''That provision charges '[t]he head of each agency' '' with responsibility for ''ensuring (in consultation with the Office of Special Counsel) that agency employees are informed of the rights and remedies available to them'' under the prohibited personnel practice and whistleblower retaliation protection provisions of Title 5.'' As the head of the IG's office it is Todd Zinser's responsibility to ensure his office is certified under this program. The Commerce OIG website currently states ''OIG has been certified by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) for conducting training and promoting awareness of provisions of the Whistleblower Protection Act, 5 U.S.C. § 2302(c).''

However, the OSC has confirmed to Committee staff that the Commerce OIG's whistleblower protection certification required under 5 U.S. Code § 2302 lapsed in September 2014. Six months later the Commerce IG's office still has made no attempts to recertify. According to multiple Commerce OIG sources as well as documentary evidence obtained by the Committee, Mr. Zinser's new Deputy IG Morgan Kim has specifically directed multiple OIG staff not to attempt to recertify.

I wish that I could provide more definitive accounts of all the misconduct that has been going on in Mr. Zinser's office, but the truth is that Mr. Zinser refused to comply with the Committee's document requests. Mr. Zinser and his Deputy IG actively worked to obstruct the Committee's investigation. These two top officials have been behind a campaign to intimidate staff into not cooperating with the Committee by pushing some to get lawyers, even though they were not the target of the investigation, and by reminding people that if they say something quotable during interviews with the Committee it may end up in the Washington Post or a Committee Report.

One individual widely known within the office to be particularly close to Mr. Zinser pressured OIG staff to call the Committee to report the ''positive'' aspects of Mr. Zinser's management. Several individuals have told the Committee they felt this was both completely inappropriate and an attempt to coerce individuals into taking part in these efforts to obstruct the Committee's investigation.

IG Zinser has also attempted to ''paper'' the Committee with a voluminous production of materials wildly unresponsive to our document requests. Since the Committee's August 2014 request letter, the Committee has received less than two boxes of responsive materials and 17 boxes of completely unresponsive material. Some material provided showed a complete lack of concern for their contents for they included sensitive personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers of Commerce OIG employees, private phone numbers and birthdates.

Meanwhile, we know that the materials we were seeking were going through an extraordinarily slow search and review process within the OIG. None of that material was ever delivered to the Committee. Committee investigators cannot recall any comparable example of such a complete failure to comply with a document request—even from private parties—across a quarter century of Committee investigations. The idea that an Inspector General, who has an obligation to cooperate with Congress that goes beyond that expected of any other Executive branch official, would fail to comply with a request from a Committee of the House is simply unfathomable.

The Committee sent two bipartisan document request letters to IG Todd Zinser on July 16, 2014 and August 26, 2014. The July letter requested documents related to Mr. Zinser's inappropriate hiring of the former Assistant IG for Administration and Rick Beitel, including copies of relevant records from his personal work journals. The letter warned Mr. Zinser: ''These journals represent official records and we remind you that such records should not be removed from the office nor tampered with in any way. The Committee intends to continue to examine the conduct and productivity of your office, and we consider your journals to be important evidence in that effort,'' the letter said. On August 26th the Committee sent a second letter to IG Zinser demanding documents concerning multiple allegations that Mr. Zinser was inappropriate collecting and monitoring his employees' e-mails in a hunt for potential whistleblowers in his office.

Six days after IG Todd Zinser received that second letter informing him of the Committee's knowledge that he was hunting for whistleblowers in his own office, the Inspector General was seen using his personal hand-truck to remove two banker's boxes of materials to his car. This occurred on Labor Day, Monday, September 1, 2014, a federal holiday when few witnesses would have been on site at the Department of Commerce. Furthermore, the Committee has evidence that IG Zinser conducted his removal of this materiel with great haste. He was in and out of his office with his two boxes of material inside of 30 minutes. Although there is no way to know what Mr. Zinser removed from his office over Labor Day weekend, the timing of his actions is highly suspicious and raises serious questions about his efforts to obstruct the Committee's investigation.

The Committee is aware of at least one more incident where records were removed from his office and destroyed. Since he is under a microscope, actions of removing or destroying records cannot help but be seen as obstructionist in nature and his cavalier disregard for the effects of this on his reputation and the opinion of others—even senior members of a Committee with broad jurisdiction over his Department—highlights the serious mismatch between Mr. Zinser and the ethical and professional requirements of serving as an Inspector General.

Mr. Zinser also invoked attorney-client privilege to prevent witnesses from fulfilling their obligation to speak to the Committee, and to withhold materials responsive to our request. As a common law, non-Constitutionally derived concept, attorney-client privilege is not recognized by Congress as a legitimate reason to withhold information during Congressional inquiries. While I understand that private parties sometimes have a particular concern with defending this privilege, I cannot fathom how a Senate-confirmed government employee, using government lawyers paid with tax dollars, can think that the work of those attorneys could be considered privileged from review by Congress.

Never in the last quarter century of Committee investigations has an official in a statutorily-established Federal office attempted to withhold materials or testimony using this claim of attorney-client ''privilege.'' The usual accommodation is for an agency to provide the records or testimony, while noting that they believe the materials should be treated with care. Frankly, OIG attorneys are routinely released from this privilege in order to cooperate with OSC and EEO investigations. The Congress should not be treated any less cooperatively than those offices, but Mr. Zinser would not release the attorneys to answer questions. His former counsel, who had been found by OSC to have engaged in prohibited personnel practices, very much wanted to speak with the Committee as he believed he had evidence that might exonerate him as well as implicate Mr. Zinser. IG Zinser specifically intervened to prevent this former employee from talking to Committee staff about illegal activities that he believes he had witnessed during his work for Mr. Zinser. This misuse of attorney-client privilege, with a hidden threat to seek punishment by the Bar if an attorney decided their obligation to the Constitution outweighed Mr. Zinser's personal desire, is clearly abusive and appears motivated by a desire

to hide evidence of his misconduct from the Congress.

I have not reached the end of the account of failed management and misconduct by Mr. Zinser. Just last month, the Department of Commerce's Office of Civil Rights issued its findings in an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO case related to age discrimination and retaliation filed by a former Commerce OIG employee. The detailed 282-page report found that the Commerce OIG discriminated against the complainant in violation of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and retaliated against him for filing his EEOC complaint '' in violation of non-retaliation provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,'' the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and ''in violation of the EEOC regulations prohibiting retaliation.'' In sworn testimony to EEOC investigators regarding the monitoring and examination of the former employee's e-mails and files, the EEOC also found that Mr. Zinser's ''testimony does not fully mesh with the documentary evidence. . . .''

The Commerce OIG has been ordered to compensate the employee for ''backpay to remedy the change to lower grade he took due to the hostile work environment'' in the IG's office; expunge its official files of the inaccurate interim performance appraisal the employee was coerced into signing and any related document; provide all supervisors in the Commerce OIG, including the IG and Deputy IG, with at least 8 hours of EEO training and require IG Todd Zinser to sign and post (for 60 days) a notice to all OIG employees that the office has been found in violation of age discrimination and retaliated against former Commerce OIG employee. The notice states that the OIG will abide by federal requirements, equal employment opportunity laws and will not retaliate against employees who file EEO complaints in the future. The notice is supposed to be placed in center within the IG's office or on the OIG intranet and is required to be signed by IG Zinser. Mr. Zinser refused for two solid weeks to sign that notice. Only after my friend, Mr. Honda, asked IG Zinser about this matter during an appearance before the Appropriations Committee did Mr. Zinser finally sign the notice on February 25.

Not for the first time, Mr. Zinser is going to rely on the taxpayer to cover the costs of his misconduct. There are more claims out there that will also cost the taxpayer to defend against and settle. In fact, during the last two years six employees in the IG's office have filed complaints of retaliation with the Office of Special Counsel. The Department of Energy's OIG, which is nearly twice as large as the Commerce IG's office has had zero complaints of retaliation filed with OSC during this same period. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) OIG, which has a staff of more than 1,200 people and is nearly seven times the current size of the Commerce OIG had a single alleged case of retaliation filed with OSC in the same time frame.

The issues I have identified reveal an endemic failing in Mr. Zinser's leadership. There is a sustained pattern of misconduct and malfeasance that would be unacceptable in any senior federal official but is particularly troubling for an Inspector General. Based on the exhaustive work by Committee staff, as well as Mr. Zinser's representations to other Members, we have convincingly shown that:

During his Senate confirmation for the Commerce IG post, Mr. Zinser failed to disclose a significant case against him involving his personal retaliation against a whistleblower;

Over a period of many years, Mr. Zinser and his closest staff have engaged in efforts to identify and retaliate against whistleblowers in his office;

Mr. Zinser has repeatedly misled the Congress about his conduct, and took steps to obstruct the Committee's investigation into allegations of misconduct;

Mr. Zinser has been disingenuous in his official correspondence with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) regarding inappropriate hiring in his office;

Mr. Zinser has failed to conduct himself by ethical standards expected of an Inspector General;

Mr. Zinser has engaged in inappropriate hiring practices that undermine the integrity of federal hiring; and,

Mr. Zinser has failed to establish policies and procedures in his office that would guarantee accountability and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, how can this person still hold a high position of public trust? His continued presence in Federal service stands as a blot on our record, in that we have tolerated such conduct by an IG. We could impeach him, and I believe there is adequate information to justify that. However, it would be time consuming and expensive, and while we worked through that process, the taxpayer would still be paying the senior leadership of DOC OIG, and whistleblowers would still be legitimately worried for their careers. That is unacceptable.

We could ask CIGIE to redo the investigation my staff and the Committee did in the 113th Congress. I respect the CIGIE, but the cold truth is that CIGIE's Integrity Committee is slow moving, and their prior failure to do diligent work into a serious allegation against Mr. Zinser leads me to question their responsiveness—or at least the responsiveness they displayed four years ago. And as with impeachment, it would be slow and expensive and whistleblowers would stand in danger every day the process dragged on.

The law provides that the President can remove an IG without any requirement that CIGIE has first done an investigation. If an IG conducts themselves in an outrageous and disreputable way, it would be irresponsible to leave them in office once that has been established. I believe that Mr. Zinser's wide-ranging misconduct, supported by just a tiny coterie of current senior staff, is sufficient in and of itself to justify immediate removal. I intend to ask the President to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have established the need for immediate change in the senior leadership of this office. The current leadership must be replaced with individuals who can serve as beacons of integrity and stewards of appropriate and diligent federal oversight. If any Member wants a fuller recounting of the evidence in this case, I will be happy to provide them with additional information.

That information provides as much documentation for my account as we can provide without compromising the position of whistleblowers whose careers still stand at risk so long as Mr. Zinser and his closest senior leaders remain in their positions. I will extend that same offer to the President as I believe that his role under law complements my own obligations as a Member to reveal significant violations of law that I believe we have uncovered.

THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH RATE

(Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I haven't been in this office very long, but it doesn't take long to pick up certain patterns of my Republican colleagues. They find a way to hamstring immigration reform or prevent women from getting the right to choose at every possible opportunity. In the case of the SGR fix, a very important bill that I am proud to have also voted for, Republicans have chosen the latter.

At the risk of pointing out the obvious, Mr. Speaker, this is 2015. We can talk to our TV remotes. We have phones that show us in 3–D the nearest restaurants, and printers that print prosthetic limbs.

In 1973, Motorola gave us the world's first mobile phone. But 1973 was also the last time there was any question of whether or not a woman had the right to make her own decisions about her health, according to the U.S. Supreme Court.

I am not the youngest Member of Congress, but I am one of the newest. So I would like to take this opportunity to invite my Republican colleagues to join me in the 21st century. Moving forward, I urge my colleagues to stop waging war on women's right to make their own choices.

194TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

(Mr. SARBANES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 194th anniversary of Greek independence, to recall the day that the Greek people established modern Greece as a free and independent nation.

America's Founding Fathers drew upon the example of the ancient Greeks in forming our constitutional Republic. The relationship between Greece and the United States is based on shared democratic values and respect for individual freedom. The spirit that guided the Greek people in securing their freedom nearly 200 years ago resides with them still.

Today Greece faces tremendous challenges. We all acknowledge that. But I am confident that Greece will ultimately overcome its economic and humanitarian crisis and thrive again. A strong Greece will be able to take full advantage of new opportunities that are emerging in the eastern Mediterranean and move forward as a vital economic and cultural resource for a critical region of the world.

As we say each year when celebrating Greek Independence Day, long live Greece, long live America, long live freedom—Zito Ellada, Zito Ameriki, Zito Eleftheria.