

The Keep Watchdogs Running Act
Introduced by Senator Carper (D-Del.) and Senator Bruan (R-Ind.)
June 24, 2021

RATIONALE:

- The *Keep Watchdogs Running Act* implements a [priority recommendation](#) of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). This bill gives Offices of Inspectors General (OIG) authority to continue oversight of agency operations during lapses in appropriations.
- Lapses in appropriations generally require government agencies, including OIG offices, to shut down and furlough employees. However, many agencies, contractors, grantees, and other program participants continue certain operations even during such lapses—without sufficient authority to operate, OIGs cannot carry out timely oversight of critical government activities during shutdowns.

CASE STUDIES:

- For example, agencies such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the U.S. Postal Service are funded independently of the appropriations process and continue to operate during government shutdowns, *while their OIGs are funded by annual appropriations and subject to shutdown.*
- Other agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice continue a large proportion of their activities during government shutdowns pursuant to emergency exceptions for public safety and law enforcement operations, *but such exceptions are not necessarily available for the OIGs to oversee those activities.*
- Agencies such as the Social Security Administration and Internal Revenue Service continue to make mandatory payments which are not subject to appropriations, *while their OIGs are limited by the absence of appropriations.*

ABOUT THE ACT:

- Amends the [Inspectors General Act of 1978](#) to authorize OIGs to continue operations as if operating under a continuing resolution during a lapse in appropriations, to the extent necessary to oversee their agency operations that continue during an appropriations lapse.
- This authority would be in addition to any existing funding authority, so OIGs could also use available multi-year appropriations or emergency exceptions for protection of life and property, if applicable, to continue operations during a government shutdown.

BILL TEXT:

- In Section 6(g) of the [Inspector General Act of 1978 \(5 U.S.C. app.\)](#), insert the following:
 - *(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and in addition to any other authority, during a covered lapse in appropriations specified in 31 U.S.C. § 1341(c), an Inspector General may incur obligations in advance of appropriations for such amounts as may be necessary, at a rate for operations as provided in the most recently enacted appropriations Acts and under the authority and conditions provided in such acts, to perform the duties of the office with respect to programs and operations of the establishment which continue during the covered lapse in appropriations”.*