

News Release



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C.

For Immediate Release
October 20, 2014
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EPA Inspector General Responds to Sen. Inhofe's Letter about Office of Inspector General's Review of Hydraulic Fracturing

WASHINGTON – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Inspector General Arthur A. Elkins Jr. today responded to Sen. James M. Inhofe's October 2, 2014, letter asserting that the EPA Office of Inspector General (OIG) should not proceed with a program evaluation of the EPA's and states' ability to manage potential threats to water resources from hydraulic fracturing.

In his letter, Inspector General Elkins said, "In choosing from among many potential projects, including with regard to hydraulic fracturing, I consider the opinions of Congress, the agency and various stakeholders about matters they think the EPA OIG should or should not review. In the end, I have to make a judgment call on whether a matter is within the purview of this office and if there is value in the work we would be doing to pursue it. Here, after considering all outside viewpoints presented to me, and the results of preliminary staff work, I have concluded that we will proceed with the review."

The Inspector General's entire response accompanies this news release.

For more information about the OIG's review, visit http://www.epa.gov/oig/reports/notificationMemos/newStarts_02-05-14_HyraulicFracturing.pdf.

The Office of Inspector General is an independent office within the EPA that performs audits, program evaluations and investigations of the EPA and its contractors, and prevents and detects fraud, waste, and abuse. By helping the agency operate more economically, effectively and efficiently, the OIG contributes to improved environmental quality and human health. The OIG strives to provide solutions to problems that ultimately result in making America a cleaner and healthier place. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/oig> and follow the OIG on Twitter at @EPAoig (<https://twitter.com/EPAoig>).

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OCT 16 2014

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

I am responding to your letter of October 2, 2014, expressing your view that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Inspector General (OIG) should not proceed with a program evaluation of the EPA's and states' ability to manage potential threats to water resources from hydraulic fracturing. We have received correspondence from another member of Congress expressing the view that this is a matter that we do need to review.

As you know, the Inspector General (IG) Act establishes the IGs as independent units within their agencies. The IGs report findings both to Congress and to their agency heads, but do not take direction from either on determining which matters they will review. That is the discretionary authority explicitly reserved by statute to the IGs in order to preserve their independence. The IGs are not required by the IG Act to "demonstrate why [the] office should be allowed to continue its work." In fact, interference by the agency or Congress in an IG's determination would be contrary to the statute.

In choosing from among many potential projects, including with regard to hydraulic fracturing, I consider the opinions of Congress, the agency and various stakeholders about matters they think the EPA OIG should or should not review. In the end, I have to make a judgment call on whether a matter is within the purview of this office and if there is value in the work we would be doing to pursue it. Here, after considering all outside viewpoints presented to me, and the results of preliminary staff work, I have concluded that we will proceed with the review.

As we move forward, we will consider the additional information you cited in your letter. The OIG makes independent decisions about the sufficiency and relevance of information taken into account in our reviews in accordance with our professional standards and the objectives of our work.

I appreciate your interest in the work of the EPA OIG. If you should have any questions or concerns about this or any other matter, please contact Alan Larsen, Counsel to the Inspector General, at (202) 566-2391.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur A. Elkins Jr.", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Arthur A. Elkins Jr.