

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
June 26, 2018 Hearing: *Pending Nominations*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Teri L. Donaldson

Questions from Chairman Lisa Murkowski

Questions: How will you prioritize office of inspector general (OIG) resources when determining which reviews and investigations to undertake? How will you ensure that information from outside the government that may be relevant to an inquiry or an investigation will be considered by OIG personnel and accounted for in reports provide to Congress and the public?

Answer: OIG resources are currently prioritized using a risk-based approach. If confirmed, I intend to utilize a risk-based approach so that OIG resources will continue to be directed to the most significant areas of inquiry. OIG also currently relies upon information from outside of the government to fulfill its mission, and I intend to continue that practice, if confirmed.

Questions from Ranking Member Maria Cantwell

Question 1: Congress created the Office of Inspector General within DOE, as within other agencies, to provide an independent and objective unit to ensure the integrity of the Department. The Inspector General must detect and deter waste, fraud, and abuse by maintaining constant vigilance over the Department's programs and operations, report any problems she finds to the Secretary and Congress, and recommend corrective actions that are needed. But, at the end of the day, all the reports and recommendations in the world don't make a difference if no action is taken on them. How will you make sure that your recommendations are heeded and that the Department takes corrective action?

Answer: The most effective manner for the OIG to encourage the implementation of its recommendations is to make clear and practical recommendations, and then track and report the Department's implementation efforts.

Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: The Hanford site is the most contaminated nuclear site in the United States, and DOE must be accountable for cleaning up its nuclear legacy there. I appreciate your response to my colleague, Ranking Member Cantwell, that you would make Hanford a priority. I believe that major changes in culture are required to ensure safety is the highest priority. One aspect of safety is protecting whistleblowers who come forward with concerns from their experience on the ground.

If confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers?

Answer: Yes.

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If confirmed, what specific steps will you take to improve the whistleblower protection culture at DOE?

Answer: I will commit to you that whistleblower safety and transparency will be a top priority for me if confirmed. Because I'm not currently employed at DOE, I have no direct experience with the culture of the Department.

Question 2: I am also concerned that despite spending billions of dollars over the past 25 years, not a single gallon of high-level radioactive waste in these tanks has been treated and there's no end in sight. I think it is time to fundamentally rethink the way in which the federal government is going about cleaning up Hanford. The mission of the Office of Inspector General is "to strengthen the integrity, economy, and efficiency of the Department's programs and operations."

If confirmed, will you commit to creating a public report that summarizes DOE operations at the Hanford site and makes recommendations to improve the integrity, economy, and efficiency of that program?

Answer: Cleaning up the waste at Hanford is one of the Department's most critical missions. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure the Hanford site has an efficient workforce, transparent review processes, and ample whistleblower protections.

Questions from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: Congress and the public count on the inspectors general to ensure that federal agencies fulfill their responsibilities with efficiency and without fraud or abuse. If you are confirmed, you would be expected to be an independent voice within the DOE. Will you commit to standing up to pressure to do something that would be contrary to facts and against the public interest in your judgement?

Answer: Yes

Question 2: What would you do if you felt that your audits or recommendations were being ignored or delayed by the leadership of the Department?

Answer: The most effective manner for the OIG to encourage the implementation of its recommendations is to make clear and practical recommendations, and then track and report the Department's implementation efforts.

Question 3: To ensure the fitness of nominees for any of our appointed positions, I ask every nominee who comes before me to answer the following two questions:

- a. Since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors, or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

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Answer: No.

- b. Have you ever faced discipline, or entered into a settlement related to this kind of conduct?

Answer: No.