

John Walk

2025 Senate Nomination Statement

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry:

My name is John Walk. Thank you for the opportunity to address my nomination for Inspector General of the United States Department of Agriculture. I am joined by my wife, Ruth, and our four daughters, Grace, Hannah, Joanna, and Phoebe. I am grateful they are at my side. With humility, I express my deepest thanks to President Trump for his nomination to this very important role.

Transparency that enables accountability is fundamental to our democratic system of government and necessary to the preservation of liberty. Like at other federal departments, the American People must have the means to acquire knowledge about the work of USDA as part of their exercise of self-government.

Inspector Generals perform a crucial function to promote transparency by informing the public of waste, fraud, and abuse in the administration of federal programs that is essential for the American People to hold government accountable for its decisions and conduct. At USDA, the Department is entrusted with stewarding more than \$200 billion of taxpayer funds annually and manages more than 300 programs in support of farmers, ranchers, and the American public. USDA authorities include farm programs, rural development, agriculture research, food safety, nutrition, trade promotion, animal and plant health, forest management, animal welfare, disaster response, federal benefits programs including SNAP and WIC, and other important areas. It is critical for USDA's OIG to shine a bright light on the many activities of the Department and its management of resources so that USDA carries out its mission effectively, efficiently, and with due accountability to the American people.

If confirmed, I will assume the responsibilities of Inspector General with the benefit of nearly 25 years of federal experience from entry level roles to senior leadership positions. My federal service began as a records clerk at the Department of Justice while I was still in high school. After graduating from college I served as a staffer in the House of Representatives for more than five years. Following law school in 2008, I entered the career civil service through the Department of Homeland Security's Honors Attorney Program. During my eight years at DHS I provided legal counsel to ensure the Department exercised its authorities in compliance with all legal requirements to secure our homeland while maintaining the constitutional rights of Americans. At DHS, I was also involved in litigating numerous federal lawsuits alleging claims for legal violations and investigated many allegations against the agency and its employees.

Immediately after DHS, I was honored to serve President Donald J. Trump for nearly four years during his first term as Associate Counsel at the White House Counsel's Office. After my service at the White House, I began my tenure as USDA's Judicial

Officer – a job I still hold in addition to Senior Advisor to the Secretary. As Judicial Officer I am the Department's appellate level administrative judge deciding formal agency adjudication enforcing various USDA legal authorities. As such, for nearly five years I have served as USDA's deciding official in administrative litigation under the delegation of three Senate confirmed Secretaries of Agriculture of both political parties. In this role, I exercise objective and independent judgment to draw factual and legal conclusions based on the evidence. It is a role that requires impartiality, fairness, and fidelity to the law and facts as they are found without regard to politics.

If confirmed, I will approach the role of Inspector General with the same objectivity and independent mindedness to expose waste, fraud, and abuse as it is found. I will draw on my almost quarter century of service in the federal government to carry out the oversight functions of this important role.

In the Bible, Jesus said, "nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light." That is exactly as it should be in government. Given the opportunity to serve as IG, I will work tirelessly to bring the work of the USDA into the light – keeping USDA leadership, Congress, and ultimately the American People, fully informed of deficiencies and problems in the Department's administration of its programs to strengthen transparency and public accountability.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to answering your questions.