

Statement of the Georgia Federation of Public Service Employees
Before the
Taskforce for Review of the Process and Procedures of the Office of the Inspector General
October 7, 2024

Good afternoon members of the Taskforce,

I am Raynard Burrell, Executive Director of the Georgia Federation of Public Service Employees. We are the fastest growing public employees' organization in Georgia. We have approximately 500 members that work for the City of Atlanta.

Our members and our City employees work hard and play by the rules. They are career civil servants. The City of Atlanta work, because they work! We are concerned about the emerging political perception with the Office of the Inspector General. We are reminded that our perceptions are in fact our realities. We must remember the appearance of fairness and objectivity is as important, as fairness and objectivity itself!

We make no comments or findings on the current Inspector General or the office; We do not know her. But what we do know, is that willy-nilly investigations, riding roughshod or operating without a clearly defined process, is a formula for failure.

We offer the following six points for the Taskforce's consideration:

1. We ask that the Taskforce provide greater clarity on the role, responsibilities, **and limitations** of the OIG. We do not believe the OIG is the FBI, GBI or even APD. Actual law enforcement and criminal investigative agencies have specified guardrails and the OIG should as well.
2. We ask that the Taskforce ensures that employees be advised as to whether they are the subject of an investigation, or a witness in an investigation.
3. We ask that the Taskforce ensures that if employees are informed, they are the subject of an investigation, that they be advised that they are entitled to have a representative of their choice present.
4. We ask that the Taskforce put in place mechanisms to ensure that the OIG does not become a powerful unelected bureaucrat with the ability to bully, intimidate or improperly influence political campaigns or duly elected officials. This type of practice was made most famous by J. Edgar Hoover, who became even more powerful than the President of the United States. We must ensure that the OIG office does not become a de facto political operation.

5. We ask that the Taskforce recommends policies to ensure the OIG office does not morph into an arena of political shenanigans. We cannot have investigations that amount to "assassination by investigation" or "assassination by insinuation". It's critical to know what types of allegations invokes the involvement of the OIA, and the consequences, if knowingly filling false allegations.

6. We ask that the scope of the OIG investigative authority be clearly defined and spelled out. What if something is being investigated by APD, HR, the Law Department, a City Commission, a committee of the City Council, a City Department Investigator; who has jurisdiction? Who has authority? Which agency should the employee file their complaint with or respond to? There are more questions, than answers. Clarity here will be helpful in understanding the process, as well as maintaining credibility and decorum.

Thank you for your participation in the process, and your expert service to our City. By working together, we can make Atlanta an even better place to work and call home.