

2024 -- H 7027

LC003844

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- INSPECTOR GENERAL

Introduced By: Representatives Nardone, Tanzi, Shanley, Vella-Wilkinson, Potter, Cortvriend, Cardillo, Perez, Noret, and Messier

Date Introduced: January 05, 2024

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Title 42 of the General Laws entitled "STATE AFFAIRS AND
2 GOVERNMENT" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

3 CHAPTER 9.4

4 INSPECTOR GENERAL

5 **42-9.4-1. Purpose.**

6 The office of inspector general shall be an independent administrative agency charged with
7 the purpose of preventing and detecting fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in the expenditure
8 of public funds, whether federal, state, or local, and relating to any and all state programs and
9 operations as well as the procurement of any supplies, services, or construction, by agencies,
10 bureaus, divisions, sections, departments, offices, commissions, institutions and activities of the
11 state of Rhode Island, including those districts, authorities, or political subdivisions created by the
12 general assembly, the governor, and any court, including any city or town within the state of Rhode
13 Island. Investigations may include the expenditures by nongovernmental agencies of federal, state
14 and local public funds.

15 **42-9.4-2. Definitions.**

16 As used in this chapter, unless the context requires otherwise, the following terms shall
17 have the following meanings:

18 (1) "Construction" means the process of building, altering, repairing, improving, or
19 demolishing any public structure or building, or other improvements of any kind to any public

1 property.

2 (2) "Contract" means all types of agreements, including grants and orders, for the purchase
3 or disposal of supplies, services, construction, or any other item. It includes:

4 (i) Awards;

5 (ii) Contracts of a fixed-price, cost, cost-plus-a-fixed-fee, or incentive type;

6 (iii) Contracts providing for the issuance of job or task orders;

7 (iv) Leases;

8 (v) Letter contracts;

9 (vi) Purchase orders; and

10 (vii) Construction management contracts.

11 It also includes supplemental agreements with respect to any of the foregoing agreements.

12 (3) "Contractor" means any person, corporation, partnership, business, union, committee,
13 or other organization entity or group of individuals performing any tasks, or duties defined under a
14 written or oral contract with and for the state of Rhode Island or the joint committee on legislative
15 services.

16 (4) "Procurement" means the purchasing, buying, renting, leasing, or otherwise obtaining
17 any supplies, services, or construction. It also includes all functions that pertain to the obtaining of
18 any supply, service, or construction item, including a description of requirements, selection and
19 solicitation of sources, preparation, and award of contract, and all phases of contract administration.

20 (5) "Public funds" means state, federal or local funds, either appropriated, non-appropriated
21 or given under right of grant.

22 (6) "Services" means the rendering by a contractor of its time and effort rather than the
23 furnishing of a specific end product, other than reports which are merely incidental to the required
24 performance of services.

25 (7) "Supplies" means all property, including, but not limited to, leases of real property,
26 printing, and insurance, except land or permanent interest in land.

27 **42-9.4-3. Establishment of office -- Appointment and removal of inspector general.**

28 (a) There is hereby established an office of inspector general, (hereinafter referred to as the
29 "office"). There shall be in the office an inspector general, who shall be the administrative head of
30 the office and who shall be appointed by a majority vote of the governor, the attorney general, the
31 general treasurer, the lieutenant governor, secretary of state, the speaker and the minority leader of
32 the house of representatives and the president and minority leader of the senate for a five (5) year
33 term to begin July 1 and end June 30, five (5) years later. The appointee shall serve one term only.
34 The person so appointed shall be selected without regard to political affiliation and with a

1 demonstrated ability in more than one of the following areas: accounting, auditing, financial
2 analysis, law, management analysis, public administration, investigation and criminal justice
3 administration.

4 (b) The selection process of a qualified inspector general shall include at least one public
5 forum. If an inspector general is not selected within one month of a new inspector general term, the
6 governor shall appoint an inspector general. The inspector general shall have at least five (5) years
7 experience in accounting, criminal justice, or a closely related profession and a bachelor's degree
8 from an accredited college or university with a major in accounting, criminal justice, or a closely
9 related field of study.

10 (c) No inspector general shall hold, or be a candidate for, any other elective or appointed
11 public office while an inspector general and for one year prior. No inspector general shall hold a
12 position in any political party or political committee, or participate in any political campaign of any
13 candidate for public office while an inspector general.

14 (d) In case of a vacancy in the position of inspector general, their successor shall be
15 appointed in the manner described in subsections (a) and (b) of this section, and shall serve from
16 their date of appointment until the fifth June 30 following their appointment. If this vacancy is not
17 filled within one month, then the governor shall appoint an inspector general.

18 (e) The person so appointed may be removed from office for cause by a two-thirds (2/3)
19 vote of the governor, the attorney general, the general treasurer, the lieutenant governor, secretary
20 of state, the speaker and the minority leader of the house of representatives and the president and
21 minority leader of the senate. Cause may include substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct or
22 conviction of a crime whether or not it is work related. The reasons for removal of the inspector
23 general shall be stated in writing and shall include the basis for such removal. The writing shall be
24 a public document. The inspector general shall have ten (10) days to submit a written appeal, which
25 shall be a public document. If no appeal is made, the inspector general shall be dismissed from
26 office. If an appeal is made, a vote shall be taken in the senate and two-thirds (2/3) vote of the
27 senate shall be required to dismiss the inspector general.

28 **42-9.4-4. Employees -- Appointment and removal, salaries, qualifications.**

29 (a) The inspector general may appoint and remove such employees as deemed necessary
30 to perform the duties of the office, including, but not limited to, assistant inspectors general, chief
31 and deputy counsels, clerks, paralegals, accountants, auditors, financial management analysts and
32 investigators. The inspector general may determine their salaries and duties; provided, however,
33 that the total amount of all such salaries shall not exceed the sum appropriated therefor by the
34 general assembly.

1 **(b) The inspector general shall file an annual personnel report not later than the first**
2 **Wednesday in February with the senate and house finance committees containing the job**
3 **classifications, duties and salary of each officer and employee within the office together with**
4 **personnel regulations applicable to said officers and employees. The inspector general shall file**
5 **amendments to such report with the senate and house finance committees whenever any change**
6 **becomes effective.**

7 **(c) No officer or employee of the office of inspector general shall hold, or be a candidate**
8 **for, any elective public office while an officer or employee, or for one year thereafter, nor shall**
9 **they hold a position in any political party or political committee, or participate in any political**
10 **campaign of any candidate for public office while an officer or employee.**

11 **42-9.4-5. Inspector general -- Salary and budget.**

12 **The general assembly shall annually set the salary of the inspector general and shall**
13 **appropriate sufficient funds for the total budget for the office.**

14 **42-9.4-6. Rules and regulations.**

15 **The office shall, pursuant to the provisions of chapter 35 of title 42, ("administrative**
16 **procedures act"), promulgate rules and regulations which shall govern its proceedings.**

17 **42-9.4-7. Duties.**

18 **(a) The inspector general shall supervise, coordinate and/or conduct audits, criminal, civil**
19 **and administrative investigations and inspections or oversight reviews, when necessary, relating to**
20 **programs and operations listed in § 42-9.4-1. The inspector general shall review laws and**
21 **regulations relating to programs and operations listed in § 42-9.4-1 and shall determine if public**
22 **bodies listed in § 42-9.4-1 are in compliance, and shall make recommendations concerning the**
23 **effect of such laws or regulations on the prevention and detection of fraud, waste and abuse. The**
24 **inspector general may recommend policies that will assist in the prevention or detection of fraud,**
25 **waste and abuse and mismanagement. The person in charge of, or the governing body of any public**
26 **body listed in § 42-9.4-1, may request the assistance of the inspector general with respect to**
27 **implementation of any reviews, audits, and/or investigations as deemed appropriate, and implement**
28 **suggested policy or procedure changes. In such events the inspector general may assign personnel**
29 **to conduct, supervise, or coordinate such activity as deemed necessary and appropriate to perform**
30 **their duties in a diligent and prudent manner. The inspector general may recommend policies for**
31 **the conduct, supervision or coordination of relationships, between state and municipal agencies and**
32 **other state and local governmental agencies, as well as federal governmental agencies and**
33 **nongovernmental entities with respect to all matters relating to the prevention and detection of**
34 **fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in or relating to any and all programs and activities of the**

1 state of Rhode Island as set forth in § 42-9.4-1.

2 (b) The inspector general shall establish and maintain an information system to receive
3 communications from the general public relating to the duties of the office to guarantee the
4 anonymity of the individual supplying the information consisting of the transmission by email,
5 regular mail or other electronic system that does not involve the use of a telephone line.

6 **42-9.4-8. Inspection of records and papers –Investigations – Subpoenas.**

7 Inspection of records and papers –Investigations – Subpoenas.

8 (a) The inspector general, in carrying out the duties outlined in this chapter, shall have
9 access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, papers, books, documents, recommendations,
10 correspondence, including information relative to the purchase of services or anticipated purchase
11 of services from any contractor by any public body set forth in § 42-9.4-1, and any other data and
12 material that is maintained by or available to any public body, regardless of the media in which it
13 is maintained which is, in any way, related to the programs and operations with respect to the state
14 of Rhode Island, including any local town, municipality or city.

15 (b) The inspector general may request information, cooperation and assistance from any
16 state or local governmental agency as may be necessary for carrying out their duties and
17 responsibilities. Upon receipt of such request, each person in charge of, or the governing body of
18 any public body set forth in § 42-9.4-1, shall furnish to the inspector general or their authorized
19 agent or representative such information, cooperation and assistance, including information relative
20 to the purchase of services or anticipated purchase of services from any contractor by any public
21 body within ten (10) business days of receipt of the inspector general’s request. If the request for
22 the information requested cannot be complied with, within ten (10) business days, the senior official
23 of the governmental agency shall notify the inspector general before the expiration of the ten (10)
24 business days as to the reason that the request cannot be complied within the time frame of this
25 section, and shall provide a specific date for expected compliance.

26 (c) The inspector general may initiate and conduct investigations, audits and compliance
27 reviews, and shall prepare detailed reports relating to findings and conclusions concerning the
28 administration of the programs and operations of the applicable public bodies listed in § 42-9.4-1,
29 as are in the judgment of the inspector general necessary and may conduct an examination of any
30 public documents, and any information with respect to whether internal quality controls are in place
31 and operating.

32 (d) The inspector general shall have direct and prompt access to the head of any public
33 body set forth in § 42-9.4-1 when necessary for any purpose pertaining to the performance of their
34 duties and responsibilities under this chapter.

1 (e) The inspector general may request the production, on a voluntary basis, of testimony or
2 documents from any individual, firm or nongovernmental entity which relate to actions or matters
3 that pertain to state or municipal governmental agencies as dictated by their duties and
4 responsibilities.

5 (f)(1) The inspector general may issue a subpoena for the production of all records, reports,
6 audits, reviews, papers, books, documents, recommendations, correspondence and any other data
7 and material relevant to any matter under audit or investigation pursuant to the provisions of this
8 chapter, no matter in which media the information is maintained.

9 (2) A subpoena may be issued only when a person, corporation or other entity under
10 investigation or being audited refuses to voluntarily comply with a request from the inspector
11 general.

12 (3) The subpoena shall be served in the same manner as a subpoena for the production of
13 documents in civil cases issued on behalf of the state of Rhode Island, and all provisions of law
14 relative to the subpoena shall apply to a subpoena issued pursuant to this chapter. Any justice of
15 the superior court may, upon application by the inspector general, issue an order to compel the
16 production of records, reports, audits, reviews, papers, books, documents, recommendations,
17 correspondence, and any other data and material as aforesaid in the same manner and to the same
18 extent as before said superior court. Any failure to obey the order may be punished by the superior
19 court as a contempt of court.

20 (4) Any subpoena issued pursuant to this section shall not be made public by the inspector
21 general or any officer or employee of that office, nor shall any documents or records provided
22 pursuant to this section be made public until such time as it is necessary for the inspector general
23 to do so in the performance of their official duties. The production of documents or records pursuant
24 to subpoena shall be governed by the same provisions with reference to secrecy, which govern the
25 proceedings of a grand jury. Disclosure of such production, attendance, and testimony may be made
26 to such members of the staff of the office of the inspector general as is deemed necessary in the
27 performance of the inspector general's duties and responsibilities under this chapter, and such
28 members of the staff may be present at the production of records.

29 **42-9.4-9. Subpoena for witness testimony and for release of material evidence.**

30 (a) Whenever the inspector general has reason to believe that a person has information or
31 evidence in their possession with respect to any matter which is within the inspector general's
32 jurisdiction to investigate, a subpoena must issue for the attendance and testimony under oath of
33 any person as designated, or the surrender of identified items of evidence; provided, however, that
34 the subpoena may be issued by the inspector general only in the performance of official duties

1 relating to the detection of fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The subpoena for testimony
2 or specific items identified as needed in support of an investigation shall include: the name and
3 address of the prospective witness or specific items identified as needed for the investigation and
4 the reasons for requesting a subpoena for testimony or production of items deemed necessary to
5 support the investigation.

6 (b) The inspector general or any other person duly authorized by law shall serve a
7 subpoena. Once the subpoena is served, the serving officer shall annotate the time and date served,
8 the person served and the location of service.

9 (c) A witness required by subpoena to attend and testify under oath and/or produce books
10 and records or other items as demanded, shall be given not less than forty-eight (48) hours notice
11 of the time and place for the taking of testimony or delivery of subpoenaed items, unless such notice
12 shall unduly interfere with the conduct of the investigation.

13 (d) The witness, at the time of service of a subpoena, shall be notified of the matter under
14 investigation concerning which the witness will be required to testify. A subject of an investigation
15 is a person whose conduct is within the scope of the investigation and is suspected of committing
16 or being party to an offense under investigation. The failure to furnish the witness with any notice
17 or information required to be given by this section shall cause the issued subpoena to be invalid.

18 (e) A person subpoenaed to testify under oath shall appear and testify under oath at the
19 time and place designated on the subpoena. In addition, the witness shall be notified that they have
20 a right to consult with and to have an attorney present at the time the testimony is taken, and that
21 they have a constitutional right not to furnish or produce evidence that may tend to incriminate the
22 person.

23 (f) The terms of any such subpoena shall be reasonable and focused on specific testimony
24 or evidence sought and shall directly relate to the matters under investigation. A subpoena issued
25 that is broad in nature is not considered valid. No subpoena shall be issued for purposes of
26 harassment or for any illegitimate or improper purpose. All constitutional and statutory rights and
27 privileges which exist with respect to any subpoena issued by the inspector general, including the
28 privilege against self-incrimination, shall have the same force and effect with any and all existing
29 laws and constitutional rights.

30 (g) A subpoenaed person may object to the subpoena served upon them in advance of the
31 return date of the subpoena by a motion to quash filed in the superior court of the state of Rhode
32 Island. The filing of a motion to quash shall stay all pending subpoenas until further order of the
33 superior court. Any justice of the superior court may, upon application by the inspector general,
34 issue an order to compel the attendance of witnesses subpoenaed, and the giving of testimony under

1 oath in furtherance of any audit or investigation under this chapter in the same manner and to the
2 same extent as before the superior court. Failure to obey any order of the court with respect to a
3 subpoena may be punished by the court as contempt.

4 (h) Any subpoena issued pursuant to this section shall not be made public by the inspector
5 general or any persons subject to their direction or by any member of the inspector general's office
6 designated to hear testimony under this section, and the same provisions with reference to secrecy,
7 which govern grand jury proceedings, shall govern testimony given. Whoever violates the
8 provisions of this subsection shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months
9 or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000). Disclosure of such testimony may be
10 made to such members of the staff of the office of inspector general as is deemed necessary by the
11 inspector general to assist in the performance of the office's duties and responsibilities and such
12 members of the staff may be present at the taking of such testimony.

13 **42-9.4-10. Compact – Investigation.**

14 (a) The inspector general shall accept and may investigate or audit complaints or
15 information from any individual concerning the possible existence of any activity constituting
16 fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement relating to programs and operations as set forth in § 42-
17 9.4-1.

18 (b) The inspector general shall not, after receipt of a complaint or information from an
19 employee, contractor or private citizen who requests confidentiality, disclose the identity of that
20 individual without the written consent of said individual, unless the inspector general determines
21 such disclosure is necessary and unavoidable during the course of an investigation. In such event,
22 the individual shall be notified immediately of the disclosure. The inspector general shall set up an
23 anonymous hotline for reporting possible wrongdoings.

24 (c) Employees are protected under chapter 50 of title 28, the ("Rhode Island
25 Whistleblower's Protection Act").

26 **42-9.4-11. Reports to the attorney general or United States Attorney.**

27 (a) In carrying out their duties and responsibilities, the inspector general shall report to the
28 attorney general, the United States Attorney or both whenever the inspector general has reasonable
29 grounds to believe there has been a violation of federal or state criminal law. The attorney general
30 shall institute appropriate proceedings in the furtherance of completing an investigation and, if
31 warranted, refer a matter for prosecution.

32 (b) The inspector general shall refer audit or investigative findings to the state ethics
33 commission, or to any other federal, state or local agency, which has an interest in said findings.

34 (c) Any referrals made under this section shall not be made public.

1 **42-9.4-12. Coordination with other state agencies.**

2 The inspector general may coordinate with other state agencies that are responsible for
3 investigating, auditing, reviewing or evaluating the management of state agencies for the purpose
4 of sharing information and avoiding duplication of effort.

5 **42-9.4-13. Civil actions.**

6 The inspector general shall have the authority to institute a civil recovery action if
7 authorized by the attorney general. In any case where the inspector general has discovered
8 fraudulent acts and believes that civil recovery proceedings may be appropriate, the matter shall be
9 referred to the attorney general. The attorney general may institute whatever proceedings deemed
10 appropriate, may refer the matter to another state or local agency, may authorize the initiation of
11 appropriate civil proceedings by the inspector general, may retain the matter for further
12 investigation, or may remand the matter to the inspector general for further investigation.

13 **42-9.4-14. Annual and interim reports.**

14 (a) The office of inspector general shall, no later than April 1 of each year, prepare a report
15 summarizing the activities of the office for the prior calendar year. The office may also prepare
16 interim reports. These reports shall be forwarded to the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney
17 general, secretary of state, general treasurer and the general assembly, and shall be made available
18 to the public.

19 (b) The report shall include, but not be limited to:

20 (1) A description of significant problems in the areas of fraud, waste and abuse within
21 programs and operations within the jurisdiction of the office;

22 (2) A description of the recommendations for corrective action made by the office during
23 the reporting period with respect to significant deficiencies in the areas of fraud, waste and abuse;

24 (3) The identification of each significant recommendation described in previous annual
25 reports on which corrective action has not been completed;

26 (4) A summary of matters referred to prosecuting authorities and the prosecutions and
27 convictions which have resulted;

28 (5) A summary of any matters concerning the recovery of monies as a result of a civil suit
29 by the office or a referral to another agency for the purposes of such suit; and

30 (6) A list of all audit reports completed by the office during the reporting period and a
31 statement of recommendations of amendments to this chapter or the rules, regulations or procedures
32 governing the office of inspector general which would improve the effectiveness or the operation
33 of the office.

34 (c) The head or governing body of each public body may, within sixty (60) days of receipt,

1 comment upon any references to the public body contained within the report. The comment, if any,
2 shall be forwarded to the governor, the attorney general, the general assembly and the office of
3 inspector general.

4 (d) The report of the inspector general shall be made public on the day of filing; provided,
5 that the report shall not list the names of individuals or corporations, nor describe them with
6 sufficient particularity as to readily identify them to the general public in those cases in which no
7 official disposition has been made by the office of inspector general, the department of the attorney
8 general or the local office of the United States Attorney.

9 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- INSPECTOR GENERAL

1 This act would establish the office of inspector general as an independent administrative
2 agency charged with the responsibility to investigate, detect, and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and
3 mismanagement in the expenditure of public funds.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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