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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- OFFICE OF INSPECTOR
GENERAL

Introduced By: Representatives Blazejewski, Kazarian, Hull, Caldwell, Shanley, Lima,
Cotter, Spears, Azzinaro, and Nardone

Date Introduced: May 19, 2026

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 OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

5 **42-9.4-1. Purpose and establishment of office of the inspector general.**

6 (a)(1) There is hereby established an office of the inspector general (the "office") that shall
7 be an independent and nonpartisan administrative agency whose purpose shall be to investigate the
8 management and operation of agencies as it relates to the prevention and detection of fraud, waste,
9 abuse and mismanagement in the expenditure of public funds that harms the public interest.

10 (2) The jurisdiction, authorization, powers, and duties granted to the office pursuant to this
11 chapter shall be in addition to, and not in contravention of, any and all jurisdiction, authorization,
12 powers, and duties of the office of attorney general, any other state or local law enforcement
13 agency, or the auditor general.

14 (3) The general assembly shall make adequate appropriations to the office of inspector
15 general to enable effective operation and independence.

16 (b) The inspector general shall be appointed by the governor with the advice and consent
17 of the senate in accordance with § 42-9.4-4 and shall direct and supervise the work of the office as
18 follows:

1 (1) The inspector general shall establish the organizational structure appropriate to carry
2 out the functions and duties of the office and shall have the power to employ, promote, and remove
3 such deputies, assistants, employees, and personnel as deemed necessary for the efficient and
4 effective administration of the office.

5 (2) The inspector general may hire the necessary support staff, and designate a deputy
6 inspector general and other qualified staff with education or experience in relevant areas, such as
7 investigations, evidence collection, audits, compliance with laws and other requirements, or other
8 forms of oversight, enforcement, or government evaluation. Provided, further, the inspector general
9 may contract for services of technical experts, including legal counsel.

10 (3) Within three (3) years after being hired, investigative staff employed by the office shall
11 become certified by the Association of Inspectors General in at least one of the following fields:

12 (i) Investigation;

13 (ii) Auditing; or

14 (iii) Evaluation.

15 (c) Nothing in this chapter shall diminish, supersede, limit, or interfere with the statutory
16 responsibilities and authority of the auditor general as provided in § 22-13-4.

17 (d) The director of administration is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable
18 quarters for the office of inspector general.

19 **42-9.4-2. Definitions.**

20 As used in this chapter:

21 (1) "Agency" means a separate agency or unit of state government created or established
22 by law and includes, but is not limited to, the following entities and officers of any authority, board,
23 branch, bureau, commission, committee, council, department, division, institution, office, public
24 corporation, or quasi-agency as the case may be.

25 Agency shall not mean and shall not include: (i) The legislative branch of state government
26 and any agency, committee, commission, or unit therein or thereof; or (ii) The judicial branch of
27 state government and any agency, committee, commission, or unit therein or thereof.

28 (2) "Contractor" means any person, corporation, partnership, business, committee, or other
29 organization entity or group of individuals, performing any tasks or duties as defined under a
30 written or oral contract with an agency.

31 (3) "Employee" means any person employed by an agency, including agency heads,
32 directors and commissioners.

33 (4) "Officer" means any person appointed to any agency.

34 (5) "Official" means any person elected to office within the executive branch of

1 government.

2 (6) "Public funds" means state, federal or local funds, either appropriated, non-appropriated
3 or given under right of grant.

4 **42-9.4-3. Qualifications.**

5 To be eligible to be appointed as an inspector general, a candidate shall have, at a minimum,
6 the following qualifications:

7 (1) Hold a bachelor's degree or higher in criminal justice, public administration, law
8 enforcement, accounting, or a related area;

9 (2) Have at least ten (10) years of professional experience in auditing, investigations, law
10 enforcement, accounting, or a related area;

11 (3) Hold a professional certificate from the Association of Inspectors General, including
12 Certified Inspector General or Certified Inspector General Investigator; and

13 (4) Demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding the mission of public service. Candidates
14 must provide prior professional opinions, positions, or actions that may influence the candidate's
15 approach to the role, which will be subject to public disclosure to the extent permitted under law.

16 **42-9.4-4. Inspector general -- Appointment -- Removal.**

17 (a) There is hereby established a five (5) member independent advisory commission
18 comprised of the following individuals:

19 (1) Attorney general;

20 (2) General treasurer;

21 (3) Secretary of state;

22 (4) Executive director of the ethics commission; and

23 (5) President of the Association of Inspectors General, or designee.

24 (b) The commission shall immediately be charged with creating a process for the
25 application, interview and selection of suitable and qualified candidates as follows:

26 (1) The commission shall consider applicants for the position of inspector general, in
27 accordance with this chapter and without regard to political affiliation, on the basis of integrity,
28 capability for strong leadership and demonstrated ability in accounting, auditing, financial analysis,
29 law, public administration, investigations, criminal justice administration, or closely related fields.

30 (2) Within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this chapter, the commission shall
31 submit to the governor a list of three (3) qualified candidates for inspector general that the governor
32 shall give due consideration in appointing one individual from the list. Within ninety (90) days of
33 receiving the list, the governor shall submit to the senate for advice and consent one individual for
34 appointment as inspector general.

1 (3) Once confirmed by the senate, the inspector general shall serve for a term of five (5)
2 years and is eligible for reappointment for a second five (5) year term, in accordance with this
3 section.

4 (c) No inspector general may serve longer than two (2) five (5) year terms.

5 (d) The inspector general and employees shall be subject to chapter 14 of title 36 ("code of
6 ethics").

7 (e) Upon a mid-term vacancy of the inspector general, an interim inspector general shall
8 be appointed in accordance with this section.

9 (f) No inspector general, officer, or employee of the office of inspector general shall hold
10 or be a candidate for any other elective or appointed public office while serving as inspector
11 general.

12 (g) No inspector general, officer, or employee of the office of inspector general shall hold
13 a position in any political party, committee, or subcommittee, or participate in any political
14 campaign of any candidate for public office while serving as inspector general.

15 (h) Eligibility restriction. The following individuals shall not be nominated for inspector
16 general until one year after the last day of the individual's holding of any of the following
17 disqualifying positions:

18 (1) A member of the general assembly;

19 (2) Any other public office holder; or

20 (3) A cabinet secretary, a department director in the executive branch, or an individual of
21 equivalent standing within the executive branch.

22 (i) Removal. The person so appointed as inspector general may be removed from office for
23 cause by the governor prior to the expiration of his or her term. Cause may include substantial
24 neglect of duty, gross misconduct or conviction of a crime, whether or not it is related to official
25 work duties.

26 **42-9.4-5. Jurisdiction -- Powers and duties.**

27 (a) The inspector general shall have jurisdiction over any official, officer, employee, or
28 agency in the executive branch of state government.

29 (b) The inspector general shall have the following duties:

30 (1) Investigate the management and operation of agencies to determine if there has been
31 evidence of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, or any other abuse of governmental resources
32 that harms the public interest, whether through acts or omissions;

33 (2) Investigate retaliation claims regarding whistleblowers;

34 (3) Report suspected acts of fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement against or within an

1 agency to the governor and, as appropriate to other state entities with jurisdiction over the matter:

2 (4) Conduct special investigations and management reviews of agencies at the request of
3 the governor;

4 (5) Establish procedures to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints, including
5 recommending whether disciplinary action or further investigation by appropriate local, state, or
6 federal agencies is warranted and taking further action as appropriate;

7 (6) Instruct and educate agencies on the detection and prevention of fraud, waste, abuse,
8 and mismanagement; conduct evaluations of relevant agency policies and procedures implicated
9 by any investigation and create a remedial action plan to prevent recurrences of fraud, waste, abuse,
10 or mismanagement that harm the public interest; and close an investigation when the inspector
11 general concludes there is insufficient evidence that a violation has occurred. Closure of any
12 investigation by the inspector general shall not bar the reopening of the investigation should
13 circumstances warrant;

14 (7) Act as a liaison to agencies to promote accountability, integrity, and efficiency in state
15 government;

16 (8) Maintain a statewide-toll-free telephone number, website, email address, and physical
17 mailing address for the receipt of complaints and inquiries;

18 (9) Work collaboratively, including through any memoranda of understanding, for the
19 purposes of efficiency, coordination, and avoidance of duplicative work with the attorney general,
20 local, state or federal law enforcement, the ethics commission, and the auditor general;

21 (10) Enter into contracts for audits or specialists needed to perform the duties outlined
22 herein. Provided, further, the inspector general shall coordinate with the auditor general to ensure
23 efficient utilization of available audit resources; and

24 (11) When formally requested by a municipal government through a city or town council
25 resolution, the inspector general may accept a request from a municipality to investigate concerns
26 regarding fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement of state or municipal government funds. All the
27 powers, duties and procedures of the inspector general set forth in this chapter for investigation of
28 agencies shall apply to any investigation related to a municipality.

29 **42-9.4-6. Investigative procedures.**

30 (a) The inspector general shall accept and may investigate complaints or information from
31 any individual or entity concerning the possible existence of any activity constituting alleged fraud,
32 waste, abuse, and mismanagement relating to any agency as defined herein.

33 (b) The inspector general shall not, after receipt of a complaint or information from an
34 employee, contractor, or private citizen who requests confidentiality, disclose the identity of that

1 individual, without the written consent of the individual, unless the inspector general determines
2 such disclosure is necessary and unavoidable during the course of an investigation. In such event,
3 the individual filing the complaint shall be notified immediately, if possible, of such disclosure
4 which shall be in accordance with applicable law.

5 (c) The inspector general shall not investigate complaints from employees that relate to
6 their employment relationship with the agency, unless the complaint is directly related to fraud,
7 waste, abuse, or mismanagement or abuse of governmental resources that harms the public interest.

8 (d) The inspector general may decline to investigate a complaint as provided by the rules
9 and regulations adopted pursuant to this chapter. If the inspector general declines to investigate a
10 complaint, he or she shall notify the complainant of the decision not to investigate and the basis for
11 that determination.

12 (e) The inspector general may refer a complaint under this chapter to the attorney general;
13 local, state or federal law enforcement, the auditor general, or the ethics commission.

14 (f) The inspector general may not levy a fee for the submission or investigation of a
15 complaint.

16 (g) The inspector general shall remain neutral and impartial and may not act as an advocate
17 for the complainant or for the agency.

18 (h) The inspector general shall adhere to professional standards for initiating and
19 conducting investigations, such as the Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General
20 promulgated by the Association of Inspectors General. Additionally, the office of inspector general
21 shall be a member of the Association of Inspectors General and participate in the peer review
22 program of the association as part of the established quality control procedures adopted by the
23 office.

24 **42-9.4-7. Conclusion of investigation -- Report -- Decision.**

25 (a) At the conclusion of the investigation of each complaint:

26 (1) Report. Upon the conclusion of an investigation that results in a finding of fraud, waste,
27 abuse or mismanagement but prior to issuing a decision, the inspector general shall issue a report
28 or letter to the agency subject to the investigation, the office of the governor, the attorney general,
29 the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the senate and shall release to the public
30 any such report unless the public release of such report would compromise a pending criminal
31 investigation noted in the report and known to the inspector general or otherwise be exempt from
32 disclosure pursuant to chapter 2 of title 38 ("access to public records");

33 (i) The director of each agency may, within sixty (60) days of receipt of said report,
34 comment upon any references to the agency contained within the report. The comment, if any, shall

1 be forwarded to the governor, the attorney general, the speaker of the house of representatives, the
2 president of the senate, and the office of inspector general.

3 (2) Decision. The inspector general shall issue a decision on the merits of the complaint,
4 including his or her recommendations, and the decision shall be posted on the inspector general's
5 website;

6 (i) Where the investigation finds that there has been or continues to be fraud, waste, abuse,
7 mismanagement, or other abuse of governmental resources that harms the public interest or that
8 there is evidence of a crime, the inspector general shall communicate its findings and decision to
9 the attorney general, local, state or federal law enforcement, or the auditor general;

10 (ii) If the complaint is about an employee of an agency or a contractor and the investigation
11 found no evidence of wrongdoing, the inspector general shall ensure that the public decision does
12 not contain the name of the individual investigated without the written permission of that
13 individual.

14 (b) Before announcing a decision, the inspector general shall do all of the following:

15 (1) Consult with the agency and as appropriate, the employee or contractor regarding the
16 decision;

17 (2) Provide an opportunity for each person who is the subject of the decision to respond in
18 writing to the decision within five (5) business days and any response shall be made available to
19 the public when the decision is released. Provided, however, this does not allow an individual
20 consulted by the inspector general before an announcement to hinder, prevent, or delay the
21 inspector general's announcement of a decision.

22 (c) In the decision, the inspector general may recommend that the agency:

23 (1) Consider the matter further;

24 (2) Modify or cancel an action or practice;

25 (3) Alter a rule, practice, or decision;

26 (4) Explain in detail the administrative action in question; or

27 (5) Rectify an omission.

28 (6) The inspector general shall communicate his or her decision to the complainant, the
29 agency investigated, and as appropriate, the employee investigated, and the decision shall be posted
30 on the inspector general's website.

31 (d) Where the inspector general has discovered fraudulent acts and believes that civil
32 recovery proceedings may be appropriate, the matter shall be referred to the attorney general.

33 (1) The attorney general may, upon such referral, institute whatever proceedings it deems
34 appropriate, including referring the matter to another state or local agency, authorizing the initiation

1 of appropriate civil proceedings by the inspector general, retaining the matter for further
2 investigation, or remanding the matter back to the inspector general for further investigation.

3 (2) If the attorney general declines to take action pursuant to this section, the inspector
4 general shall have the authority to institute a civil recovery action upon the authorization of the
5 attorney general.

6 (e) The public release of the inspector general's decision shall not contain information that
7 is confidential pursuant to this chapter or other applicable laws, including chapter 2 of title 38
8 ("access to public records").

9 **42-9.4-8. Access to agencies and records.**

10 (a) Agencies shall cooperate with any investigation conducted pursuant to this chapter, and
11 the inspector general shall have reasonable access to an agency's records as necessary to conduct a
12 full investigation of a complaint including, but not limited to, the following:

13 (1) Access to records in the possession of a grantee or contractor;

14 (2) The opportunity to interview an employee or any other individual who may have
15 knowledge relating to the complaint under investigation.

16 (b) The inspector general may inspect and copy all relevant information, records, or
17 documents that the inspector general considers reasonably necessary in an investigation of a
18 complaint under this chapter.

19 (c) The inspector general is authorized to interview any official, officer, or employee
20 serving in the agency and may inspect and copy any book, record, paper, or electronic file in the
21 possession of the agency, taking care to preserve the confidentiality of the information, pursuant to
22 § 38-2-13 relating to access to public records.

23 (d) Any knowing failure of any official, officer, or employee to comply with an
24 investigation made pursuant to this chapter or the knowing provision of false information during
25 an investigation or the destruction or attempted destruction of any relevant materials may be subject
26 to criminal, civil, and/or administrative penalties.

27 **42-9.4-9. Oaths -- Subpoenas.**

28 (a) In performing an investigation authorized by this chapter, the inspector general shall
29 have the authority to administer or take from any person an oath, examine witnesses under oath,
30 and issue any subpoenas necessary to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of all
31 books, records, papers, electronic and tangible items that constitute or contain evidence which the
32 inspector general finds reasonably relevant or material to the investigation, affirmation, or affidavit,
33 whenever necessary to perform his or her duties.

34 (b) Service of any subpoena issued under this chapter shall be made by any designated

1 person. Service upon a natural person may be made by personal delivery of the subpoena to that
2 person. Subpoenas may also be served upon a natural person by registered or certified mail and the
3 return receipt shall constitute prima facie proof of service. Service to a natural person may also be
4 made by serving as the person's counsel of record. Service may be made upon a domestic or foreign
5 corporation by delivering the subpoena to an officer, to a managing or general agent, or to any other
6 agent authorized by appointment or by law to receive service of process. A subpoena requiring the
7 attendance of a witness may be served at any place within the state and furthermore, process may
8 be served at any place within the state.

9 (c) In the case of a refusal to obey any issued subpoena, the inspector general may request
10 that the attorney general petition the superior court to compel compliance with the subpoena. The
11 attorney general may petition the court upon such request by the inspector general.

12 (d) Upon filing of the petition, the court may enter an order directing the individual to
13 appear before the court at a specified time and place and then and there show cause why they had
14 not attended, answered questions under penalty of perjury, or produced the requested items as
15 required by the subpoena. If it appears to the court that the subpoena was properly issued by the
16 inspector general, the court may enter an order that the person named in the subpoena appear at the
17 time and place fixed in the order and answer questions under penalty of perjury or produce the
18 requested items as required. Upon failure to obey the court order, the person may be subject to
19 contempt of court.

20 (e) Nothing in this section shall limit or alter a person's existing rights or protections under
21 state or federal law.

22 **42-9.4-10. Rules and regulations.**

23 The office shall promulgate rules and regulations which shall govern its proceedings and
24 operation pursuant to chapter 35 of title 42 ("administrative procedures").

25 **42-9.4-11. Confidentiality.**

26 All investigative records, including communications that include the investigative record,
27 are confidential and exempt from public disclosure under chapter 2 of title 38 ("access to public
28 records").

29 **42-9.4-12. Reporting requirements.**

30 (a) The inspector general shall, no later than April 1 and every year thereafter, file a written
31 report summarizing the activities of the office for the prior calendar year. The office may also
32 prepare and file interim reports. These reports shall be forwarded to the governor, lieutenant
33 governor, attorney general, secretary of state, general treasurer, the speaker of the house, the
34 president of the senate and the auditor general, and shall be made available to the public.

- 1 **(b) The report shall include, but not be limited to:**
- 2 **(1) A description of investigations undertaken related to fraud, waste, abuse, or**
- 3 **mismanagement within agencies;**
- 4 **(2) A description of any recommendations for corrective action made by the office during**
- 5 **the reporting period with respect to significant deficiencies in the areas of fraud, waste, abuse or**
- 6 **mismanagement;**
- 7 **(3) The identification of each significant recommendation described in previous annual**
- 8 **reports on which corrective action has not been completed;**
- 9 **(4) A summary of matters referred to prosecuting authorities and the status of said referrals;**
- 10 **(5) A summary of matters concerning recovery of monies as a result of civil action**
- 11 **undertaken by the office or after a referral to the attorney general; and**
- 12 **(6) A list of all audit reports completed by the office during the reporting period.**

13 **(c) The report of the inspector general shall be made public on the day of the filing. Where**

14 **no official disposition has been made by the office, the attorney general, or other law enforcement**

15 **agencies, the report shall not list the names of individuals or corporations, nor describe them with**

16 **sufficient particularity as to readily identify them to the general public.**

17 **42-9.4-13. Budget submission.**

18 **The inspector general shall comply with all budget submission requirements set forth in**

19 **chapter 3 of title 35 ("state budget").**

20 **42-9.4-14. Retaliation -- Whistleblower protections.**

21 **(a) No agency, officer, or official shall take action against an official, officer, or employee**

22 **for disclosing or threatening to disclose the existence of any activity constituting waste, fraud,**

23 **abuse, or mismanagement to the inspector general, unless the disclosure or threatened disclosure**

24 **was made with knowledge that the disclosure was false or was made with willful disregard for its**

25 **truth or falsity.**

26 **(b) Any report disclosed by the office may differ from the complete written report in that**

27 **the inspector general shall have the discretion to redact or otherwise protect the names of**

28 **complainants and witnesses, or other information that, if not redacted, might compromise the**

29 **identity of a complainant or witness.**

30 **(c) The provisions chapter 50 of title 28 ("the Rhode Island whistleblowers' protection act")**

31 **shall be afforded to persons including, but not limited to, employees, reporting information under**

32 **this chapter.**

33 **42-9.4-15. Severability.**

34 **If any provision of this chapter or the application thereof to any individual or circumstance**

1 is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions or applications of this chapter,
2 which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions
3 of this chapter are declared to be severable.

4 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 -- OFFICE OF INSPECTOR
GENERAL

1 This act would establish the office of inspector general to investigate the management and
2 operation of agencies in an effort to prevent and deter fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in
3 the expenditure of public funds.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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