Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2026

Ms. Sarah Nelson
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Energy
The Office of the Inspector General
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Ms. Nelson,

We write to request that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiate an evaluation into the Department of Energy's (the Department or DOE) "Project Velocity" initiative announced on August 13, 2026, which revised 46 operating directives and cancelled four other directives governing the Department's National Laboratories, nuclear production plants, and site operations.[1]

While the Department claims Project Velocity modernizes operations by shifting from procedural compliance to performance-based accountability, we are concerned that these sweeping rollbacks weaken critical safety protections, eliminate standardized occurrence and injury reporting, and eliminate formal dispute-resolution mechanisms. Further, we are troubled by the lack of transparency around the process of determining which DOE orders were modified or cancelled, who was involved in that process, and what criteria were used to make final determinations under Project Velocity.

Given the Department's history of contractor oversight challenges and deficiencies, we are concerned that these latest and extensive regulatory changes prioritize easing contractor requirements at the expense of protecting facility and worker safety, preserving independent Federal oversight, and guaranteeing fiscal accountability.

In light of these concerns, we request that the OIG investigate the following matters regarding Project Velocity:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement and Undue Contractor Influence:** Which external stakeholders—including Management and Operating (M&O) contractors, subcontractors, labor unions, worker representatives, independent oversight entities, and subject matter experts—were formally consulted or involved in developing and approving these directive changes? To what extent did M&O contractor leadership exercise influence, undue or otherwise, over the decision to cancel or modify specific DOE orders, and did contractor personnel directly propose or draft specific policy language?

[1] https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-modernizes-national-laboratory-operations-strengthen-americas-scientific

2. **Analysis of Drivers, Safety versus Cost-Cutting:** What empirical baselines, safety assessments, or risk analyses were conducted to justify these modifications? And how do those baselines compare with past practices and approaches used at DOE to propose, modify, or finalize directives? Did DOE rigorously validate that these recent changes preserve safety standards, and was reducing operating costs and administrative burden the primary or sole driver of the changes?

3. **Impact on Federal Oversight Capacity:** To what degree do these modified and cancelled directives weaken or diminish the Department's operational abilities, legal authority, and/or technical capacity to conduct appropriate, independent Federal oversight of contractors? Does the delegation of key decisions to contractor discretion or the shortening of review timelines restrict or make more challenging to any degree the Department's ability to proactively monitor contractor performance and hold contractors accountable?

4. **Taxpayer Risk Exposure:** How do these changes impact DOE's ability to detect cost overruns, schedule delays, worker exposures, or operational risks early across the DOE complex? Does the loss of standardized enterprise data expose the Federal Government and American taxpayers to higher long-term liability?

Thank you for your dedication to safeguarding Federal resources and public safety, upholding good governance, and eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse. We request a briefing for our committee staff by the OIG on the planned scope and timeline for this requested review within 30 days of this letter.

Sincerely,





Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
House Committee on Appropriations

Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Senate Committee on Appropriations