

**Statement of  
Edward Timothy Keable  
Deputy Solicitor - General Law  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Before the  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
United States House of Representatives**

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Chairman Gohmert, Ranking Member Dingell, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Ed Keable and I am the Deputy Solicitor for General Law at the Department of the Interior (Department).

I have been a career public servant for over twenty-five years, beginning as a lawyer in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. I have been the Department's Deputy Solicitor for General Law since 2012. While serving in the Army, I learned the value of public service and the importance of providing high-quality and thoughtful legal counsel. Since my arrival at the Department, I have proudly served both Republican and Democratic administrations with equal dedication to excellence, with the goal of ensuring that the Department pursues its great mission in a lawful and ethical manner.

As the Deputy Solicitor for General Law, I am responsible for managing the Division of General Law in the Solicitor's Office, the Office of Ethics, and the legal work in the Office's regional and field offices. As would be expected by such a large agency with diverse missions, the general legal work carried out in the Solicitor's Office is equally as diverse, and includes providing counsel on administrative matters that may include Departmental organization and delegated authorities, appropriations law, information law, contracting and procurement issues, grants, patents, copyrights, trademarks, property management, land titles, records management, personnel and civil rights matters, issues involving the Insular Areas administered by the Department, and issues involving Native Hawaiians, to name just a few.

A part of my area of legal practice also includes providing legal advice to senior leaders in the Department in response to reports of investigation from the Office of Inspector General. In that capacity, I give counsel on whether and how subjects of OIG reports of investigation might be held accountable and whether and how bureaus and offices might improve processes addressed in those reports.

The Department's ethics program is also located within the Office of the Solicitor, and is sound, robust, and serves the Department well. The Department Ethics Office (DEO) has been recognized by the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) for leading a strong program.

The DEO is made up of a talented group of ethics attorneys and professional staff headed by the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Officer (DAEO). It is important to note that the DEO is

not an enforcement or investigatory office, but one that provides ethics advice, counseling and education to the Department's employees. The DEO also manages the financial disclosure reporting process.

Each bureau in the Department has the regulatory responsibility to manage its own ethics programs. Bureau directors are tasked with the responsibility of managing the ethics programs in their bureaus and they rely on dedicated ethics professionals to assist them in this important work. The DEO works closely with the bureau ethics programs to ensure they are operating to the standards established by OGE.

The DEO audits bureau ethics programs. Using the information from these audits, from OIG reports, and from day-to-day engagements DEO staff has with clients and bureau ethics professionals, the DEO continually looks for opportunities to improve the Department's ethics program. Some examples of improvements that the Department has made to its ethics program in recent years include: the establishment of a full-time deputy ethics counselors (DEC) in every bureau at the GS-14 level or higher; elevating the reporting level of the DECs in the bureaus; increasing training opportunities for both ethics professionals and employees generally; increasing the organizational ties between the DEO and the bureau ethics programs; and strengthening recusal processes, financial disclosure, and advice and counseling processes. The DEO maintains a general supervisory role in relation to the bureau ethics programs, has review and concurrence authority for the hiring the DECs, sets the performance standards for the DECs, and has input in the performance ratings of the DECs.

The constructive relationship between DEO and OIG is critical to the success of both organizations. The Interior DAEO has access to the OIG for referral of possible ethics breaches. The OIG investigators have access to the DEO staff as subject-matter experts in OIG investigations that touch on ethics issues. Relationships like these, between these critically important offices, serve to strengthen the Department's ethics program.

The Department is committed to promoting a culture of ethics within the Department and to providing its employees with a strong ethics program. I look forward to any insights Members of the Subcommittee might have to assist the Department in meeting these important goals. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.