

## **NYPD Inspector General Bill (Int. 881-A): A Fact Sheet**

On Tuesday, May 28, 2013, members of the New York City Council, led by Jumaane Williams, Brad Lander, and Speaker Christine Quinn, re-introduced a [bill](#) to create an inspector general for the New York City Police Department (NYPD). The following fact sheet explains the function, structure, and purpose of an inspector general for the NYPD.

**Q: What's the point?**

**A:** The purpose of creating an NYPD inspector general is to help the police work better and to ensure that they fully respect the civil rights of the city's diverse communities.

- Independent scrutiny pushes bureaucracies to ask questions they don't normally ask, but should. It can lead to better policing, as shown by the experience of the Los Angeles Police Department and the FBI.
- An inspector general would help the Mayor and City Council oversee the NYPD by providing them with objective, unbiased information of a type that is not currently available.
- Whistleblowers could bring information to the inspector general, who is independent of the NYPD.
- The inspector general would not work against the police, but rather cooperate with the police commissioner to correct any problems in the department.
- All of this would contribute to enhancing public trust in the police and fostering better police-community relations.

**Q: How would it work?**

**A:** The NYPD inspector general would be part of the Department of Investigation (DOI). The City Charter established the DOI to serve as an independent and nonpartisan watchdog for New York City government; it already covers more than 300 city entities including the Fire Department and the Department of Correction. The bill requires the DOI Commissioner to exercise oversight over the police as well. The DOI Commissioner must appoint an inspector general dedicated to the NYPD and notify the City Council of the person selected.

**Q: What would the inspector general do?**

**A:** The NYPD inspector general's basic job is to investigate, review, study, and audit police operations, policies, programs and practices. The inspector general will decide which investigations to perform, but must conduct any investigation directed by the Mayor or City

council. Based on these investigations, the inspector general will make recommendations for improving NYPD operations, policies, programs and practices. The inspector general cannot require any changes, but rather will report these recommendations to the NYPD, the Mayor, and the City Council for action. The police commissioner has an opportunity to comment on these reports. The inspector general will also submit annual summary reports on the office's oversight activities. Public versions of all reports and findings must be available online.

**Q: Would the inspector general have subpoena power?**

**A:** As part of the DOI, the NYPD inspector general would have the authority to subpoena witnesses and evidence with the approval of the DOI commissioner.

**Q: How would sensitive information be protected?**

**A:** While an inspector general is designed to increase transparency and accountability, this bill recognizes that there will be a need to ensure that some information does not become public, such as the details of an ongoing investigation or the names of undercover officers and confidential informants. The inspector general would have access to this sensitive information, but the Mayor, in consultation with the NYPD, would establish guidelines to determine how it should be protected from public disclosure. One way in which the federal government protects sensitive information is by limiting distribution of full reports and creating public versions that reflect essential issues but are scrubbed of operational details.

**Q: How will the inspector general work with Internal Affairs and the CCRB?**

**A:** The NYPD inspector general would not have any authority to discipline police officers or adjudicate complaints about specific instances of misconduct. However, both the director of the Civilian Complaint Review Board and the chief of the NYPD's Internal Affairs Bureau would be required to report to the inspector general any problems they might encounter related to policies and practices harming the effectiveness of the department, public safety, the exercise of civil liberties and civil rights, or the public's confidence in the police force.

**Q: How is this bill different from the one introduced last year?**

**A:** The inspector general bill introduced in June 2012 (Int. 881) would have created a new office, independent of the DOI. This bill (Int. 881-A) places the inspector general inside the DOI. The strength of this arrangement is that we know the DOI system works and we know it is legal. It will ensure that the inspector general has sufficient authority to do his or her job while preserving the Mayor's power and ultimate accountability for city agencies.