

Subject Line: Who Watchdogs Trump?

Dear __,

We will soon have a Chief Executive who is so thin-skinned that he regularly gets into Twitter-spats with actors about comedy skits. To describe our soon-to-be President as hair-trigger may be an understatement. So, which of his appointees are prepared to deliver bad news to a man perhaps best known by his reality TV tagline: “You’re Fired?”

Consider Inspector Generals, who act as official watchdogs. Right now, one-fourth of the 36 presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed “IG” slots are [vacant](#), including those for major agencies such as Defense, Interior, Energy, Commerce and the CIA.

But even the sitting IGs – whether presidentially-appointed or not – can be [summarily removed](#) by a President Trump who needs only give Congress a reason for the firing in writing. However, it does not have to be a good reason (such as an unfavorable comparison to Rosie O’Donnell) and is not subject to challenge.

So, what IG is going to expose a Trump boondoggle or reveal that one of his pet initiatives has produced far less than the promised “tremendous” results?

Or consider the U.S. Special Counsel, the [independent guardian of whistleblowers](#) and the merit system. The five-year term of the Obama-appointed Special Counsel ends in June. What type of Special Counsel will a President Trump appoint?

George W. Bush, for example, appointed a right-wing nut job who [dismissed hundreds of whistleblower cases](#) and ultimately [went to jail](#) for destroying evidence in a probe of his own retaliation against whistleblowers inside the OSC. Right now, there are also enough vacancies for Trump to fill to swing the balance of the Merit Systems Protection Board, the civil service court. Would a President Trump want to protect or to extirpate whistleblowers?

And throughout government there are hundreds of scientific integrity officers, ombudsmen, ethics advisors and general counsel deputies who, simply by doing their jobs, may find themselves in political harm’s way.

Nor, with Republican control of both houses, can we count on Congressional oversight to curb abuses. If anything, civil servants can expect Congress to help fuel and wage purges to reduce or neuter disfavored agencies.

As a result of all this, at PEER we expect to be busier than ever.

The expected decline of these institutional checks means that federal public servants will be forced to take direct action to protect both themselves and their agencies’ statutory mission. That is when they call PEER. Among other actions, we expect to –

- Litigate, not only to overturn illegal abdication of official duties but also to block attempts to politicize the merit system. PEER is the only environmental and public health group with a mission to defend the integrity of public service;
- Conduct oversight from within. The best people to guide public attention to key developments inside these bureaucracies and their significance are the experts who already work for the public (but who are finding it increasingly hard to do their day jobs); and
- Poke the Bear. At PEER we pride ourselves on delivering pointed messages which prompt official reaction. More than most, Donald Trump does not like to be laughed at. Throughout his campaign, he reversed course whenever it verged on generating titters. Ridicule will be one of our most potent weapons.

In the coming months, PEER expects to be standing shoulder-to-shoulder inside agency field offices, laboratories and research stations throughout the county. As we go forward, it would help if you [had our backs](#).

Sincerely,

Jeff Ruch
Executive Director

P.S. See why right-wing plans to [roll back national monuments](#) won't work.

P. P.S. Look at the stealth effort to both [downsize and dumb-down local weather forecasting](#) even as the rise in extreme weather makes local knowledge and experience even more important as a matter of public safety.

P.P.P.S. Did you know that you can support PEER when you shop at Amazon? Start your shopping at <http://smile.amazon.com/>, sign in, and choose Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility as your designated charitable organization. Amazon will donate .5% of the price of your purchases to PEER, at no extra cost to you.

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