

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

July 27, 2017

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Helen M. Albert
Acting Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Acting Inspector General Albert:

It is our understanding that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has been investigating mismanagement at the Alexander County Housing Authority (ACHA) in Cairo, IL. In the meantime, hundreds of tenants in Cairo are being forced out of their housing units due to years of negligence and mismanagement by ACHA administrators. Therefore, it is vital that you to complete your investigation as soon as possible and make your findings public.

For years, HUD sent letters to ACHA raising concerns about significant administrative problems being ignored by the executives. In May 2010, HUD found financial and management problems during a program review and requested that ACHA document how the issues would be resolved. In October 2013 and again in November 2014, HUD sent letters to ACHA outlining physical and managerial (including financial) problems and requested an action plan to address them. It wasn't until August 2015 that HUD entered into a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with ACHA to resolve all the ongoing management and housing problems.

Yet, HUD turned a blind eye each time ACHA failed to resolve its significant problems. It was not until six months after *The Southern Illinoisan* newspaper brought to light the extraordinary extent of the ACHA mismanagement, beginning with the article "Chaos in Cairo,"¹ that HUD finally stepped in and took possession of the housing authority. HUD placed ACHA in receivership in February 2016, and has subsequently found conditions far worse than originally thought. Many of the housing units in Cairo are now uninhabitable and the tenants are being forced to move.²

Just recently, HUD issued a proposed notice of debarment against three former ACHA officials – two former executive directors and one former board member. This is a long overdue

¹ http://thesouthern.com/news/local/chaos-in-cairo/article_2dcf027e-e465-552a-a71f-fd8085941b6e.html

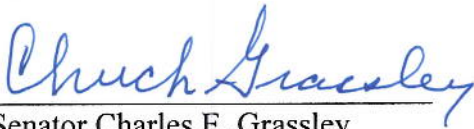
² <http://www.wpsdlocal6.com/story/35852337/cairo-illinois-moves-forward-with-plans-for-new-housing>

first step to holding accountable those who were feathering their own nests with the federal funding provided to help those in need, but more must and should be done.


It is absolutely necessary that the HUD OIG ensures that the investigation is transparent by making any findings of financial and administrative mismanagement available, at least to Congress, if not directly to the public. While we understand that the agency has a policy against making public pronouncements about the outcome of an investigation, given the extraordinary circumstances of this case, we ask that you grant an exception to this policy. We also ask that you please provide a redacted copy of the HUD OIG audit report to our offices when completed.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Janet Drew of Senator Grassley's staff at (202) 224-6170, or Lakecia Foster of Senator Durbin's staff at 202-224-2152.

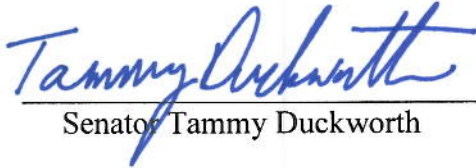
Sincerely,




Senator Charles E. Grassley
Chairman



Senator Richard Durbin



Senator Tammy Duckworth



Rep. Mike Bost