

Prepared Statement of PETER J. CONIGLIO
To be Inspector General of the Export-Import Bank of the United States
United States Senate
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
November 20, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Brown, and Members of the Committee for inviting me to appear before you today. It is my great honor and privilege to be the President's nominee to be the Inspector General of the Export-Import Bank of the United States. I am very humbled to be considered for this position.

With me today is my wife of 42 years, Jamie Wright Coniglio. She is my rock and my biggest fan, and there isn't any way that I would be here today before you without her support and encouragement.

I'd also like to express my appreciation to my current and former colleagues in GSA's Office of Inspector General for their terrific support throughout this process. They are all consummate professionals.

I am here today because my grandparents came to this country from Italy: my father's father from Sicily in 1897 and my mother's parents from Calabria – the “toe of the boot” after the turn of the 20th Century.

My late father served in the Army Air Force in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II, while my late mother worked to support the war effort stateside. They were among that great generation of Americans who were tempered by the hardships of the Great Depression and who then went on to win World War II and the Cold War.

I could not have had better parents. My being here today is also a testament to them.

Since my graduation from Drake University Law School, I have been afforded many opportunities and experiences that have prepared me for this opportunity.

I served with a legislative staff in the Iowa State Senate in Des Moines, and after we moved to the D.C.-area I served with the legislative affairs shop of a major trade association.

I was then fortunate to serve as a legislative assistant for Rep. Jim Ross Lightfoot of Iowa – as a line-counsel for Sen. Charles Grassley's then-Senate Judiciary subcommittee staff – and then as the late Rep. Lawrence Coughlin's Minority Chief Counsel and Staff Director of the then-House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control.

I then moved from Capitol Hill to the Justice Department, where I served for about thirteen years. My major activities there included working in its Office of Legislative Affairs and in the General Counsel's Office of its Executive Office for United States Attorneys.

After the Justice Department, I was hired as the Senior Counsel for Ethics in the Office of General Counsel at the Treasury Department.

Since June 2006, I have been in the Office of Inspector General at the General Services Administration, working for three Inspectors General. Each of them tutored me on how to be an effective Inspector General.

In addition to my present position with the GSA, I headed – for almost four years – the OIG’s compliance office reporting directly to the GSA Inspector General. From there, I stood up the GSA OIG’s first audit report writing and editing team. As lead editor, I oversaw the production of the OIG’s audit reports – an OIG’s first-line of communication with its agency. Our team’s objective was to ensure that an audit report was readable, objective, and usable.

Throughout its history, EXIM’s unique mission has helped finance the export of American goods and services in order to support American jobs.

If confirmed, my goal will be to provide EXIM’s leaders with timely and objective findings and understandable and usable recommendations regarding the Agency’s programs and operations and to inform EXIM’s leaders of any fraud, waste, or abuse the OIG uncovers.

If confirmed, I commit to overseeing rigorous investigations to pursue the facts wherever they may lead.

As a Senator Grassley alum, he set the standard for me, among many, when it comes to Inspectors General and educated me on the key role an OIG plays in an agency’s success. Senator Grassley taught me that whistleblowers are to be respected and taken seriously.

If I am confirmed, I will ensure that the Office of Inspector General at EXIM has an open-door policy and provides every opportunity for those who want to report on information that they may have on any waste, fraud, or abuse occurring at EXIM. If I am confirmed, the Office of Inspector General will see to it that whistleblowers receive every protection afforded to them by the law.

I am also well aware of Congress’ role in the responsible use of taxpayer resources. If confirmed, I intend to maintain a strong and open line of communication with this Committee, the Senate, and the House of Representatives.

Mr. Chairman, my time with GSA OIG has attuned me to the role a fully functioning, objective, and independent Office of Inspector General plays in an agency’s success. I call this “regular order.”

I understand EXIM has strong supporters and strong detractors. As you know, EXIM's Board of Directors has only recently returned to regular order with a quorum.

This is all the more reason to return EXIM's Office of Inspector General to its own regular order. Since the EXIM Inspector General position became vacant in June 2014, the OIG's dedicated professionals have supported its continued operations. But Senate-confirmed leadership in an independent Office of Inspector General is more likely to have greater influence on EXIM, and more likely to have the confidence of EXIM's proponents, as well as its detractors.

My approach as Inspector General would not be to act as EXIM's adversary or its enemy. Instead, I would intend to foster a healthy, productive, and open professional relationship with EXIM.

Along with restoring a sense of regular order to EXIM's Office of Inspector General – if confirmed – I would like to review several programs and initiatives that I have read about in the OIG's last two Semi-Annual Reports to Congress.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I firmly believe that I am prepared to take the helm of the Office of Inspector General at the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and I look forward to the challenge.

Thank you for your time today. I will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.