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March 10, 2008

Integrity Committee
President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency
935 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Room 3117
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is intended for the Council's Integrity Committee, as it relates to the actions of an Inspector General.

I request an independent investigation into the manner in which John P. Higgins, Jr., Inspector General of the United States Department of Education, accepted, conducted, and reported his audit of the Reading First program. I recommend that the Committee consider whether Mr. Higgins and his staff conducted this audit in a capricious and biased way. Particularly troubling is Inspection Report ED-OIG/I13-F0017, *The Reading First Program's Grant Application Process Final Inspection Report*, released September 2006.

For example:

- Mr. Higgins launched an audit of exceptionally large size and scope based on a complaint from a vendor. Mr. Higgins speculated widely on the financial motivations of others, but failed to consider the blatant financial motivations of the complainant.
- Mr. Higgins conducted a "gotcha" investigation, ignoring exculpatory evidence and publishing reports filled with innuendo rather than concrete facts. The reports include findings about things that could have happened, rather than things that did happen.
- Mr. Higgins's reports place blame on a single individual—the director of the program. Either the Inspector General did not investigate or chose not to report how that individual operated within a chain of command.
- Mr. Higgins stoked media and political interest in this report with unfounded insinuations that additional significant findings would be forthcoming.

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Mr. Higgins's actions have caused severe harm to the nation's neediest school children, as the funding for this successful program – the only No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program rated "effective" by the Office of Management and Budget – has been dramatically cut by Congress as a direct result of the Inspector General's findings.

Mr. Higgins did not find waste, fraud, or abuse in the Reading First program. He found a few profane emails and spun them into a sensational, unsubstantiated report. I believe that, if you review the original complaint in conjunction with the report issued in September 2006, you will agree that Mr. Higgins's actions warrant review by your committee.

I ask that you investigate these matters and make a full report by December 31, 2008, so that the public and Congress can decide for themselves whether the Reading First program was "mismanaged" or simply maligned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a long horizontal line.

Michael J. Petrilli

V.P. for National Programs and Policy