

Chapter 92

2026 Regular Session

Subject Inspector general

Bill S.F. 856

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Overview

This act establishes an Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in the executive branch. The governor will appoint a qualified individual to serve as inspector general (IG), subject to supermajority confirmation by the senate.

Among other things, the act requires the OIG to oversee the work of existing agency-based inspectors general and investigate credible allegations of fraud or misuse in programs administered by state agencies. Beginning January 1, 2028, the IG can establish and oversee a law enforcement bureau staffed by licensed peace officers who are empowered to make arrests.

Governor Tim Walz signed this act into law on May 14, 2026.

Article 1: Office of the Inspector General

This article establishes the OIG and the Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission. It also appropriates funding to the OIG and certain named agencies.

Section Description – Article 1: Office of the Inspector General

1 Public reports of fraud and misuse.

Requires the legislative auditor to refer all credible public reports of fraud or misuse to the IG. Authorizes the legislative auditor to coordinate reviews and investigations with the IG when such coordination conserves resources without compromising the review or investigation.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

2 Public official.

Provides that the IG and all OIG employees are public officials for purposes of Minn. Stat. ch. 10A. With this designation, OIG staff are required to file annual statements of economic interest with the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, declare in writing potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the performance of official

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duties, and decline gifts from lobbyists and other individuals or entities that attempt to influence public decision-making.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

3 Agency head salaries.

Adds the IG to a list of executive branch agency heads whose compensation is determined by the state's Compensation Council.

Effective date: As amended by Laws 2026, chapter 119, article 2, section 14, this section takes effect June 1, 2026.

4 Office of the Inspector General.

Provides that the IG is an independent entity in the executive branch with specified responsibilities. Requires the inspector general to operate independently of other executive agencies and report directly to the governor. Requires the person appointed as IG to direct an Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

5 Definitions.

Defines key terms such as "fraud," "misuse," and "investigation."

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

6 Inspector general.

Subd. 1. Minimum qualifications. Establishes minimum education, experience, and professional certification requirements for the position of IG. Restricts eligibility for former agency leaders and elected officials.

Subd. 2. Appointment. Requires the legislative commission established in section 15 to receive applications, vet candidates, and recommend IG finalists to the governor. Authorizes the governor to appoint a qualified applicant who was not recommended by the legislative commission. Requires confirmation by a 3/5 supermajority of the senate.

Subd. 3. Term. Sets a five-year term for the IG, with potential for unlimited additional terms if each is confirmed by a 3/5 senate supermajority.

Subd. 4. Vacancy. Establishes deadlines for the legislative commission to submit recommended candidates to the governor.

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Subd. 5. Disclosure. Requires IG candidates and appointees to disclose all political affiliations or other partisan activity prior to senate confirmation.

Subd. 6. Nonpartisanship. Requires the IG and all OIG employees to perform their duties without regard to partisan preference or influence and to refrain from partisan activities and speech unless protected by the state or federal constitution.

Subd. 7. Removal. Limits the governor’s ability to remove an IG before the IG’s term expires. Allows the governor to remove an IG only for cause after both a public hearing and approval by the senate and the house of representatives.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

7 Powers and duties.

Subd. 1. Authorized powers and responsibilities. Establishes 11 separate duties for the IG, including evaluating the work of the separate offices of inspector general that exist within certain state agencies; facilitating information sharing between agencies and coordinating investigations that involve multiple agencies; alerting relevant state agencies when the inspector general has a reasonable suspicion that fraud or misuse has been committed; and maintaining an exclusion list that includes each program and individual for which the inspector general has obtained a court order or made a recommendation to freeze or cease payment.

Subd. 2. Relationship to powers and duties of other agencies. Grants the IG authority to investigate fraud and misuse in any program administered by a state agency and identifies those agencies that have primary investigatory responsibility for specific programs. Requires the IG to refer credible reports to the legislative auditor, and to the Department of Human Services when the reports pertain to Medicaid. Provides that this chapter does not limit or interfere with the authority or responsibilities of the Office of the Legislative Auditor.

Subd. 3. Alerting agency of issue; seeking a court order to freeze funds. Authorizes the IG to seek a court order to stop an agency from distributing public funds in certain circumstances when the IG has a reasonable suspicion that fraud or misuse is occurring. Requires the IG, working with the applicable agency, to ensure that impacted Minnesotans who are not implicated in the suspected wrongdoing are notified of their rights.

Effective date: Provides that this section takes effect January 1, 2027, except for specified portions that require federal approval which will take effect later if federal approval is not received by January 1, 2027.

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8 Law enforcement powers.

Subd. 1. Authorization. Authorizes the IG, beginning January 1, 2028, to appoint licensed peace officers and establish a law enforcement agency called the Inspector General Anti-Fraud and Waste Bureau to conduct statewide investigations and make statewide arrests for criminal offenses that are within the bureau’s jurisdiction.

Subd. 2. Jurisdiction. Defines key terms. Establishes the bureau’s jurisdiction as suspected fraudulent activity, misuse, or criminal conduct concerning public programs, employees, and officers, as these terms are defined.

Subd. 3. Coordination with other law enforcement agencies. Requires the bureau to develop a policy for notifying and working with other law enforcement agencies that have concurrent jurisdiction. Specifies the bureau’s jurisdiction vis-à-vis the Department of Human Services and the attorney general’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit.

Subd. 4. Policy for notice of investigations. Requires the bureau to develop a policy for notifying law enforcement agencies with primary jurisdiction when the bureau initiates an investigation in another agency’s jurisdiction.

Subd. 5. Chief law enforcement officer. Requires the IG to appoint a chief law enforcement officer if the IG establishes the bureau. Establishes qualifications for the chief law enforcement officer and this officer’s power to oversee the bureau’s other employees.

Subd. 6. Compliance. Requires the bureau to comply with all statutes and rules governing the operation and management of a law enforcement agency.

Subd. 7. Powers and duties; limitations. Provides that civil or administrative powers and duties provided to the IG elsewhere in this chapter do not apply to the bureau and prohibits the IG from delegating the auxiliary powers bestowed to the IG under section 9 to the bureau.

Subd. 8. Evidence, documentation, and related materials. Authorizes the bureau to designate a representative as necessary to secure or inspect a matter located in another state.

Subd. 9. Annual report on activities and cost-effectiveness. Requires the chief law enforcement officer of the bureau to report specified information to the governor, the IG, and the leaders of certain legislative committees annually.

Subd. 10. Assignment of peace officers; employment status. Authorizes the IG, whether or not the IG establishes a law enforcement bureau, to enter into

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agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies to assign peace officers to the OIG.

Subd. 11. Data practices. States that the bureau is subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

9 Auxiliary powers.

Grants the IG subpoena powers in all matters relating to the IG's official duties. Requires executive branch and local public officials and employees, and private entities that receive public funds, to cooperate with the IG's inquiries. Requires district courts, when requested by the IG, to compel obedience or punish disobedience as for contempt when a person does not obey a lawful direction by the IG or provide requested information to the IG in response to an IG order or subpoena. Establishes a gross misdemeanor crime for swearing falsely to the IG under oath.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

10 Identification of fraud reporting tool.

Requires state agencies to prominently post on the agency's website the separate fraud reporting tools administered by the OIG and the legislative auditor. Requires all state grantees to do the same for the duration of the grant agreement.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

11 Data practices.

Subd. 1. Definitions. Defines key terms by reference to the Government Data Practices Act.

Subd. 2. Government Data Practices Act. Provides that the IG is subject to the state's Data Practices Act. (Under this act, the general presumption is that data created or maintained by the state is public unless otherwise provided by law.) Specifies that the IG is an agency head for purposes of the state's Data Practices Act.

Subd. 3. Access. Provides the IG access to data of any classification to perform the IG's duties, and that agencies do not violate state data classification laws when sharing data with the IG pursuant to a subpoena.

Subd. 4. Dissemination. Authorizes the IG to disseminate data of any classification to named entities.

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Subd. 5. Legislative auditor. Requires the IG to disseminate data of any classification to the legislative auditor upon request.

Subd. 6. Data classifications; civil investigations. Limits public access to civil investigative data while an IG investigation is active, and provides that this data becomes public once the investigation is complete or has been referred except in certain specified circumstances, including when an individual supplies information based on an assurance of anonymity. Provides that, however, investigative data does not become public and instead becomes private or nonpublic data when the IG decides to no longer actively pursue an investigation, except for certain specified data such as a general description of the investigation and its disposition.

Subd. 7. Privileges. Provides that nothing in this act requires disclosure of information that is legally privileged under law.

Subd. 8. Criminal investigations. Provides that this section does not apply to criminal investigations conducted by the Anti-Fraud and Waste Bureau.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

12 Resources.

Authorizes the IG to hire and manage staff in accordance with state civil service statutes. Requires the IG to employ at least one attorney. Specifies that except for the IG, who serves in the unclassified service, all other OIG employees serve in the classified service (and therefore may only be fired for cause). Provides for the compensation of OIG employees and specifies that compensation for classified OIG employees who are represented by a state employee union is governed by the relevant collective bargaining agreement. Allows the IG to contract with external experts for professional and technical services that are intellectual in character and result in the production of a report or the completion of a task, subject to certain constraints (see Minn. Stat. § 16C.08).

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

13 Reporting and transparency.

Requires the IG to issue public reports detailing completed investigations and corrective actions. Requires the IG to maintain fraud and misuse tip lines that allow for anonymous reporting. Requires the IG to report each December regarding all investigations the IG did not open after receiving a tip or decided to no longer actively pursue, which must include certain specified summary data.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

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14 Professional standards and review.

Requires the IG to adhere to professional standards as promulgated by the Association of Inspectors General or other recognized bodies. Requires the governor to contract for external review of the OIG after years two and four of each IG term, with findings made public.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

15 Legislative inspector general advisory commission.

Establishes an eight-member joint house-senate commission to recommend IG candidates to the governor. The commission has equal representation between the house and senate and between the two largest caucuses in each house. Authorizes the commission to conduct hearings to review the IG's impartiality, independence, and effectiveness.

Effective date: This section took effect on May 15, 2026 (i.e., the day following final enactment).

16 Legislative auditor or inspector general.

Modifies an existing duty of state officers and employees to report evidence of the unlawful use of public funds or property to the legislative auditor. Authorizes these officers and employees to report this information to the IG instead.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027.

17 Office of the Inspector General establishment and transition.

Establishes deadlines for initial IG candidate recommendations and appointment. Requires the OIG to be fully operational by September 1, 2027. Provides for the protection of the rights and status of certain employees of the Department of Education who will transition to the new OIG. Requires the transfer of corresponding assets and unspent appropriations too. Requires the Department of Administration to provide or lease office space in the city of St. Paul for rental to the OIG. States that no employees of the Departments of Human Services; Children, Youth, and Families; or Corrections transfer to the new OIG, nor do Department of Education employees that work in the student maltreatment program or are dedicated to student maltreatment investigations.

Effective date: This section took effect on May 15, 2026 (i.e., the day following final enactment).

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18 Legislative Inspector General Advisory Commission; initial appointments and first meeting.

Establishes deadlines for initial appointments to the legislative commission, requires the senate majority leader to designate a senator to convene the first meeting by September 15, 2026, and requires the commission to elect a chair during its first meeting.

Effective date: This section took effect on May 15, 2026 (i.e., the day following final enactment).

19 Interagency agreements.

Requires the OIG to enter into separate agreements with the Department of Human Services; the Department of Children, Youth, and Families; the Department of Health; the Department of Education; and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Among other things, these agreements will govern how the agencies and the OIG will coordinate any joint fraud and misuse investigations, including cost-sharing. Prohibits these agreements from limiting the OIG's authority, powers, or responsibilities.

Effective date: This section takes effect January 1, 2027, except for the paragraph governing the Department of Human Services, which will take effect later if federal approval is not received by January 1, 2027.

20 Appropriations.

Appropriates money to the OIG, certain named agencies, and the legislature for purposes of this act.

Note: The appropriations in this section were modified by Laws 2026, chapter 119, article 1, sections 2 to 5.

Article 2: Conforming Items and Repealers

Among other things, this article contains provisions pertaining to cooperation between the OIG and the legislative auditor, modifying program integrity statutes for the Department of Education, and requiring agencies with primary investigative authority over specified programs to submit any final investigative reports to the OIG.

Section Description – Article 2: Conforming Items and Repealers

1 Application.

Adds the OIG Anti-Fraud and Waste Bureau to the list of law enforcement agencies whose arrest, request for service, response, and other data is uniformly governed by the state’s Data Practices Act.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

2 Leave for legislative service.

Provides that legislators who take a mandatory leave of absence from a state executive branch job have the same rights to employee benefits as if the leave had not been taken. Provides that a legislator on leave from an executive branch job has the same rights with respect to pensions and retirement as a legislator who takes leave from a local government job.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027, and applies to state employee collective bargaining agreements that take effect on or after that date.

3 Definitions.

Modifies definitions that govern program integrity powers and duties of the Department of Education. Provides that the term “inspector general” for purposes of this section will shift to the new statewide OIG when the IG assumes responsibility for identifying and investigating fraud, misuse, and other unlawful uses of public funds in the Department of Education and its programs.

Effective date: This section is effective July 1, 2026, except for the paragraph that defines “inspector general” for purposes of Minn. Stat. § 127A.21 as the new IG, which will take effect once the IG assumes responsibility for identifying and investigating fraud, misuse, and other unlawful uses of funds in the Department of Education.

4 Sanctions; appeal.

Modifies the Department of Education’s authority to impose sanctions, including the withholding of payments, to coincide with the new withholding authority provided in section 8.

5 Limits on receiving public funds; prohibition.

Authorizes the Department of Education to place limits on the receipt of department-issued funds by certain individuals and entities that are not school districts, charter schools, cooperative units, or libraries.

Section Description – Article 2: Conforming Items and Repealers

6 Notice.

Requires the Department of Education to notify within five days any program participant that the department takes action against under section 5.

7 Appeal.

Authorizes a program participant to request appeal of an action taken by the Department of Education under section 5. If the appeal request is filed with the department within 30 days of the notice required under section 6 and includes all information required under this section, the appeal is to be considered by an administrative law judge in the state Court of Administrative Hearings.

8 Withholding of payments.

Authorizes the Department of Education to withhold payment to a program participant if the inspector general determines there is a credible allegation of fraud or misuse for which an investigation is pending for any program administered by a state or federal agency. Specifies which classes of allegation are to be considered credible. Provides that a withholding under this section must end when the inspector general determines there is insufficient evidence of fraud.

9 Office of the Inspector General; reports.

Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to submit final investigative reports pertaining to alleged fraud or misuse in the child care assistance program to the IG.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

10 Withholding of payments.

Expands the definition of “credible allegation of fraud” for purpose of payment withholding by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to include information provided by the IG.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

11 Office of the Inspector General; reports.

Requires the Department of Human Services to submit final investigative reports pertaining to alleged fraud or misuse in the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children to the IG.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

Section Description – Article 2: Conforming Items and Repealers

12 Withholding of payments.

Expands the definition of “credible allegation of fraud” for purpose of payment withholding by the Department of Human Services to include information provided by the IG.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

13 Office of the Inspector General; reports.

Requires the Department of Human Services to submit final investigative reports pertaining to alleged fraud or misuse in the Medicaid program to the IG.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

14 Definitions.

Modifies the existing definition of “peace officer” for purposes of occupational licensing and oversight by the state Board of Peace Officer Standards and Training to include employees of the Anti-Fraud and Waste Bureau authorized in article 1.

Effective date: This section is effective January 1, 2027.

15 Existing duties abolished; transfers provided.

Abolishes, except as provided in article 1, section 17, subdivision 7, the Department of Education’s existing OIG duties effective the day after the new OIG established under this act assumes responsibility for this work. Provides that at that time, all active investigations, obligations, contracts, records, etc., transfer from the Department of Education to the new OIG.

Effective date: This section is effective July 1, 2026.

16 Revisor instruction.

Requires the revisor of statutes to retitle a section of Minnesota Statutes.

17 Repealer.

Repeals statutes that establish and govern the work of the Department of Education’s OIG effective the day after the new OIG established under this act assumes responsibility for this work.



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