



**One Hundred Fifteenth Congress**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 26, 2017

The Honorable John Roth  
Inspector General  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
Washington, DC 20528-0305

Dear Inspector General Roth:

I am writing to request that the Office of the Inspector General investigate a ceremony held at the White House on October 12, 2017, and applicable policies for charging the Department of Homeland Security for events held at the White House.

On October 11, 2017, Kirstjen Nielson was nominated for Secretary of Homeland Security. The following day, a “glitzy ceremony” was held in the East Room of the White House to celebrate the nomination.<sup>1</sup> According to reports, cabinet officials and corporate lobbyists enjoyed several hours of cocktails and live entertainment. It is my understanding that the White House subsequently billed DHS \$8,000 for the party, although traditional policy is to charge a Department only if an event “is seen as furthering the mission” of the agency.<sup>2</sup>

I find it hard to understand how a cocktail reception with corporate lobbyists benefits DHS’s mission, particularly at a time when many parts of the country, especially Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, are reeling from the effects of devastating hurricanes. I also find it troubling that the party was held in the East Room, a space traditionally reserved for press conferences and meetings with world leaders, not cocktail hours with representatives of special interests. It is critically important now, more than ever, to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

With this in mind, I would like you to review the relevant policies for hosting events such as this, and the circumstances under which DHS may be charged. I also recommend that you issue a management alert if necessary. I propose you review the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Timmons, Heather. “White House Held a Party For Its DHS Nominee, Then Sent the Agency the Bill.” *Government Executive*. 20 Oct. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

1. The total costs of the ceremony and reception held on October 12, 2017, including a breakdown of charges related to catering, entertainment, and any other expenses;
2. Any relevant policies detailing the circumstances under which a ceremony held at the White House may be charged to a federal agency; and
3. A detailed explanation for the circumstances and basis under which DHS was charged for the White House ceremony and reception held on October 12, 2017.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Alison Northrop, Chief Director for Oversight, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON

Ranking Member

House Homeland Security