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### Profile in Public Integrity: Melinda Miguel

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## Profile in Public Integrity:

### Melinda M. Miguel

#### Former Chief Inspector General, Florida

*Melinda Miguel served as Florida's Chief Inspector General from 2007-10 and 2011-17, and has also served as an Inspector General for the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the Florida Department of Education, the Florida Office of the Attorney General, and the Florida State Board of Administration. She is currently the CEO and President of Melinda Miguel Solutions, a management consulting company.*



#### How did you initially become involved in oversight work?

In the early 90's, Lawton Chiles became governor of Florida. He was a primary sponsor of the Inspector General concept in the Federal Government and wanted to develop a similar oversight mechanism to benefit state government in Florida. I was working at the Florida Lottery and was asked to join the office of inspector general very soon after the office was created. What I learned was that the strength of the IG concept flowed from the synergy of internal audit and internal investigations working together.

#### You have extensive experience serving as Chief Inspector General for Florida Governors Charlie Crist and Rick Scott. What were your responsibilities as Chief Inspector General?

The Chief Inspector General is responsible for promoting accountability, integrity, and efficiency in the agencies under the jurisdiction of the Governor. More specifically, the Chief IG should:

- Initiate, supervise, and coordinate investigations, recommend policies, and carry out other activities designed to deter, detect, prevent, and eradicate fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, and misconduct in government.
- Investigate, upon receipt of a complaint or for cause, any administrative action of any agency, the administration of which is under the direct supervision of the Governor, regardless of the finality of the administrative action.
- Coordinate complaint-handling activities with agencies.
- Coordinate the activities of the Whistle-blower's Act and manage the whistle-blower's hotline to receive complaints and information concerning the possible violation of law or administrative rules, mismanagement, fraud, waste, abuse of authority, malfeasance, or a substantial or specific danger to the health, welfare, or safety of the public.

The Chief Inspector General also appoints and evaluates the Inspectors General in the agencies under the Governor and monitors their independent work.

## How did you use your Chief Inspector General role to enhance the independence of Florida's OIGs while conducting internal investigations and audits?

After several corruption scandals in our state, Governor Crist petitioned for a grand jury to consider the following on a statewide basis:

1. Examine criminal activity of public officials who have abused their powers via their public office;
2. Consider whether Florida's prosecutors have sufficient resources to effectively combat corruption;
3. Address the effectiveness of Florida's current statutes in fighting public corruption;
4. Identify any deficiencies in current laws, punishments or enforcement efforts and make detailed recommendations to improve our anti-corruption initiatives;
5. Investigate crimes, return indictments, and make presentments; and
6. Examine public policy issues regarding public corruption and develop specific recommendations regarding [improving current laws](#).

The [resulting report](#) contained numerous recommendations regarding Inspectors General. I began a focused endeavor to address these recommendations.

For example, as Chief Inspector General, I worked with numerous components of the Governor's Office to enhance the Florida Inspector General Act to provide greater independence for state agency Inspectors General. Specifically, we changed the Act to allow for Chief Inspector General appointments for some, but not all, executive branch agency inspectors general. We have added certain qualifications and certifications for some agency level Inspectors General. We have also tried to make agency IG budgets more independent (this effort was not successful). We successfully amended the Act to require employee cooperation with an agency IG and added subpoena power in some circumstances. We also moved the needle on getting an independent legal counsel for the Chief Inspector General. These were positive accomplishments, but more work needs to be done. In addition to legislative reforms, I worked with state agency Inspectors General to educate Agency Heads and others about the importance of the Florida Whistleblower Act and the need for independence of agency Inspectors General. However, my primary strategy for advancing independence in audit and investigations was to try to ensure that OIG staff dealt only in supportable facts and met the strict standards of the audit and investigations disciplines. These standards include appropriate planning, adequate supervision and testing for accuracy and reliability of evidence and conclusions. We must never take lightly the burden placed upon us to get it right.

**Independence is a  
fundamental tenet of a  
successful inspector general  
function.**

**You obviously have extensive oversight experience, most of it working in Florida government, which has more Inspectors General than any other state. What do you think are the keys to an effective IG program?**

- 1) **Independence** is a fundamental tenet of a successful inspector general function. An office must be established, funded, and given its mandate, mission and powers in the right way and with the right tools to ensure ample protection from pressure, threat of removal, or limits to resources. Model legislation can be found on the website of the Association of Inspectors General at [www.inspectorsgeneral.org](http://www.inspectorsgeneral.org).

- 2) Inspectors General should be given **additional resources** to help them perform their duties including, but not limited to the following: **exemptions from public records** while cases are active; **law enforcement powers** for investigators; **mandated public reporting** for issued reports (i.e. posting on websites); and a dedicated independent funding source that cannot be manipulated outside the OIG, including a specific provision for **independent legal counsel** that represents the interests of the Office of Inspector General.

**You've served as an IG, but also have extensive experience as an auditor. Some feel that IGs are redundant as long as a capable auditor is serving in an oversight role. In your experience, what value do IGs add?**

I have served as an IG with legislatively mandated internal auditing activities in addition to investigative functions. I also served in auditor roles within state agencies and reported within the management chain of command of those agencies. In my opinion, the most effective and clearest view of a system, program, or operation is from outside of the management chain of command. The value that IGs add includes protecting public trust through an independent appraisal and investigative function, but one that still understands the agency, its culture, its limitations, and its challenges. A truly independent IG provides the most value to leaders, stakeholders, and the public.

**You were recently the President of the Association of Inspectors General. How do organizations like AIG and CAPI help their communities of public integrity professionals?**

One of the greatest things for me about joining the Association of Inspectors General in 1997 was the comradery I found to exist among likeminded professionals facing similar challenges and mandates. AIG provided me with a network of people all over the country with whom I could benchmark my professional activities, practices, and philosophies. In addition, AIG's training opportunities, professional standards and certification programs have enabled me to advance myself, my team, and our profession to achieve the highest standards of excellence. CAPI likewise is creating a community of public integrity professionals, including but not limited to IGs, and is providing that community with first-rate events, best practices publications, research into important topics, and much more. I am so pleased to have discovered CAPI and encourage anyone in this field to check them out!

I also believe that a major contributor to my success as an Inspector General and Chief Inspector General was my involvement in trade associations that support the mission for auditing, investigations, and the prevention and detection of fraud, waste and abuse in government. These associations -- the Association of Inspectors General, Association of Government Accountants, International Institute of Internal Auditors, Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, and the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators -- have been instrumental in providing networking and training opportunities that have been invaluable in my professional development and certification. I highly encourage anyone who is interested in raising the bar for their profession, obtaining better skills, and networking with like-minded individuals to join, participate with and obtain certification from any of these organizations. I met Jennifer Rodgers and Rose Gill Hearn with CAPI and Bloomberg Associates, respectively, and many other high caliber professionals through my affiliation with the Association of Inspectors General. Thank you Jennifer and Rose! Thanks to CAPI and Bloomberg Associates for your dedication to advancing public integrity. You are a model for the nation and the world to follow.