

**To:** Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**From:** POLITICO Pro  
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**Subject:** Interior IG probing Zinke call to Murkowski over health care vote

By Esther Whieldon

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The Interior Department's inspector general's office told lawmakers today that it has launched a preliminary investigation into Secretary Ryan Zinke's effort to get Sen. [Lisa Murkowski](#) to back Obamacare repeal last week.

In a [letter](#) to Reps. [Raúl Grijalva](#) and [Frank Pallone](#), Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said she is looking into "potential legal and ethical violations" by Zinke. The secretary called Murkowski July 26 to convey the administration's dissatisfaction with her vote against a motion to proceed on the GOP health care bill.

Murkowski today said that pressure from the administration was one of several reasons she delayed a markup that had been scheduled for July 27 to consider several nominees. The panel [voted](#) today to advance the nominees.

"But we also were dealing with the very proximate timing of issues coming out of the White House related to health care that really had nothing to do with energy and yet some had made it tied to energy," Murkowski told POLITICO today. "But ... even if that had not happened, we still were looking at whether or not the timing was right to move forward with the markup."

Murkowski said that she did not take Zinke's call as a threat and that his department has not done anything to stop or slow down the issues she cares about since then.

Zinke [posted](#) a photo on Twitter today of him and Murkowski sharing a beer. "My friends know me well," he wrote.

Murkowski characterized their relationship as "very strong, professional, friendly, cordial and respectful."

**WHAT'S NEXT:** Murkowski said she is hopeful the Interior and Energy department nominees that cleared her committee today will be confirmed by the full Senate before adjourning for recess, which is expected later tonight. They were not part of a large batch of nominations confirmed earlier this afternoon, but negotiations continue.

*To view online:*

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