



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

February 3, 2020

All,

It is truly an honor to be appointed as the Inspector General for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board. As I begin my tenure, I would like to reaffirm the Office of Inspector General's unwavering dedication to identifying, eliminating, and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse in agency programs and operations. The OIG cannot, however, effectively and faithfully carry out its mission without the support of agency employees, contractors, subcontractors, and grantees. To this end, I am writing to you today to emphasize the important role whistleblowers play in the OIG's efforts. I am committed to making all employees aware of their whistleblower rights and the safeguards in place to protect whistleblowers.

The Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 provide protection rights against retaliation for federal employees who engage in protected whistleblowing activities. Similarly, 42 U.S.C. § 4712 protects employees of agency contractors, subcontractors, and grantees against retaliation for engaging in protected whistleblowing activities.

Under the WPEA, "protected whistleblowing" is defined as the disclosure of information about which the employee reasonably believes is:

1. A violation of law, rule, or regulation.
2. Gross mismanagement.
3. Gross waste of funds.
4. An abuse of authority.
5. A substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.
6. Censorship related to scientific research or analysis, if that censorship meets one of the categories listed above.

Employees of the EPA, as well as employees of agency contractors, subcontractors, and grantees, making protected whistleblowing disclosures to the OIG can do so by contacting our [OIG Hotline](#). Your confidentiality will be protected unless you give consent for disclosure or disclosure is unavoidable during an investigation, audit, or evaluation.

As an agency employee, if you believe you have been retaliated against for protected whistleblowing activities, you may seek relief by filing a complaint with the [Office of Special Counsel](#). The OSC has the authority to investigate and prosecute reprisal for whistleblowing. As an employee of a contractor, subcontractor, or grantee, if you believe you have been retaliated

against for protected whistleblowing activities, you may seek relief by filing a complaint with the [OIG Hotline](#).

Furthermore, my office has a Whistleblower Protection Coordinator, whose job is explaining the rights available to employees, contractors, subcontractors, or grantees who believe they qualify as whistleblowers and the remedies against retaliation for protected disclosures. The Whistleblower Protection Coordinator can be reached at whistleblower_protection@epa.gov or (202) 566-1513.

Additional information on whistleblower protection and prohibited personnel practices can be found in [Administrator Wheeler's Message to EPA Employees](#) or on the [Office of Special Counsel's website](#).

I look forward to working with you to create a safe and productive environment within the EPA and to fulfill the critical missions of both the OIG and the agency at large.

Thank you,

Sean O'Donnell
Inspector General