



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

July 29, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Tomorrow is National Whistleblower Appreciation Day, which marks the passage of the United States' first whistleblower protection law on July 30, 1778, just two years after the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence and became a new, singular nation. This law, passed in response to a petition by servicemembers against their commanding officer for abuse of British prisoners of war, established the then-radical expectation that "all persons in the service of the United States"—as well as all of its inhabitants—inform "Congress or other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or misdemeanors committed by any officers or persons in the service of these states, which may come to their knowledge." In addition to this powerful affirmation of the servicemembers' actions, the law stipulated that the United States pay the legal fees that the servicemembers incurred defending themselves against a retaliatory suit filed by the commanding officer.

The fact that protections for whistleblowers have existed—no matter how rudimentary at first—for almost as long as our country illustrates the high regard our nation's founders held for those who root out waste, fraud, and abuse. Today, whistleblowers continue to play a critical role in keeping our government honest, efficient, and accountable. The laws protecting whistleblowers continue to evolve as well, offering greater and more protections against retaliation. Since 1989, the federal workforce has been protected under the Whistleblower Protection Act. That law, however, contained loopholes and was open to interpretations that were contrary to the interests of whistleblowers. Congress passed the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 to close these loopholes and clarify the interpretations, strengthening protections for whistleblowers.

During the first month of my tenure as the EPA inspector general, I stated my commitment to making all EPA and Chemical Safety Board employees aware of their whistleblower rights and to ensuring a safe and productive environment within these agencies. In that [message](#), I also outlined the resources available to employees who wish to make protected disclosures or who believe they may have been retaliated against for engaging in protected whistleblowing activities. Those resources, and my unwavering commitment to support whistleblowers and protected whistleblower activities, remain available to all EPA and CSB employees.

As the EPA and CSB inspector general, I witness firsthand how the courage of those who take a stand against inefficiencies and deceit has the power to effect change, both big and small. Whistleblowers can save lives, but they can also identify procedural failings that prevent the government from providing effective and efficient services. They can save billions of taxpayer dollars, but they can also reveal duplicative processes and systems to streamline government operations.

And who are these whistleblowers? Some are well-known, but more often, they are everyday public servants and citizens who simply have the resolve to do the right thing. This day is for them, and for you—to recognize the whistleblowers of the past and educate the whistleblowers of the future.

The EPA OIG relies on whistleblowers to achieve *our* mission of helping the EPA and CSB fulfill *their* missions in the most economic and efficient manner possible. Their—and your—support makes our work possible.

For more information about whistleblowing, including how to contact the whistleblower protection coordinator or the OIG Hotline, please visit the OIG’s website, take a look at our “Whistleblower Protection” [webpage](#), read our “OIG Hotline” [webpage](#), and listen to our recent [podcast](#) about whistleblowers.

Sincerely,



Sean W. O'Donnell