



Office of Inspector General United States Department of State

WHISTLEBLOWER INFORMATION

Whistleblowers perform an important service for the Department of State, U.S. Agency for Global Media, and the public when they report what they reasonably believe to be evidence of wrongdoing. They should never be subject to reprisal for doing so.

Federal laws protect Department of State and U.S. Agency for Global Media employees, contractors, subcontractors, grantees, subgrantees, and personal services contractors from retaliation for making a protected disclosure.

What is a protected disclosure?

A protected disclosure is information that the whistleblower reasonably believes is evidence of:

- a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety;
- a violation of any law, rule, or regulation;
- gross mismanagement;
- a gross waste of funds; or
- an abuse of authority.

Federal employees may make a protected disclosure to the Office of Special Counsel, OIG, or another employee designated by the Department of State or U.S. Agency for Global Media to receive such disclosures. Federal employees are also protected if they make a disclosure to other individuals or organizations (e.g., a congressional committee or the media), provided that the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law and the information is not classified.

Employees of federal contractors, subcontractors, grantees, or subgrantees, or personal services contractors may make a protected disclosure to:

- a member of Congress, or a representative of a committee of Congress;
- OIG;
- the Government Accountability Office (GAO);
- a Federal employee responsible for contract or grant oversight or management at the relevant agency;
- an authorized official of the Department of Justice or other law enforcement agency;
- a court or grand jury; or
- a management official or other employee of the contractor, subcontractor, grantee, or subgrantee who has the responsibility to investigate, discover, or address misconduct.

Disclosures involving classified information should be made in accordance with applicable laws, and individuals should consult with OIG to ensure that such disclosures are made appropriately.

What can I do if I believe retaliation has occurred?

Federal employees and employment applicants can file a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), an independent federal agency that investigates prohibited personnel practices and can order federal agencies to remedy whistleblower retaliation. They may file a complaint on OSC's website: <https://osc.gov/pages/file-complaint.aspx>.

Employees of contractors, subcontractors, grantees, and subgrantees, as well as personal services contractors, may file a complaint with OIG, which will investigate such complaints and report its findings to the Department of State or U.S. Agency for Global Media. The Department of State or U.S. Agency for Global Media may then order the employer to take remedial action, such as job restoration, back pay, or removal of suspensions. Employees may file a complaint on OIG's website: <https://www.stateoig.gov/contractor-whistleblower-reprisal>.