



# Whistleblower Retaliation

## What is whistleblower retaliation?

A federal employee authorized to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action may not take, fail to take, or threaten (to take or fail to take) a personnel action with respect to an employee because of a **protected disclosure** or **protected activity**.

*EXAMPLE: A supervisor directs the geographic reassignment of an employee because the employee reported safety violations to senior agency officials or because the employee filed a complaint with the Office of Inspector General.*

## Protected disclosure is defined as a communication from an employee that the employee reasonably believes evidences:

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

## Protected activity is defined as:

1. Filing a complaint, grievance, or appeal to remedy a violation of section 2302(b)(8);
2. Testifying for or helping someone else with these activities;
3. Cooperating with or disclosing information to the Special Counsel, Inspector General, or any other agency component responsible for internal investigation or review; or
4. Refusing to obey an order that would require violation of a law, rule, or regulation.

## What can you do if you believe whistleblower retaliation has occurred?

If you believe that you have been subject to retaliation for making a protected disclosure or engaging in protected activity, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC). OSC is an independent agency that investigates and prosecutes allegations of prohibited personnel practices (PPPs) by federal employees. OSC has the authority to investigate PPPs, including allegations of whistleblower retaliation, and may seek corrective or disciplinary action when warranted.

### **To file a complaint of whistleblower retaliation contact:**

**U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL COUNSEL  
1730 M STREET, N.W., SUITE 218  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036-4505**

<https://osc.gov> | [info@osc.gov](mailto:info@osc.gov)

**PHONE: (202) 804-7000\* | TOLL FREE: 1-800-872-9855\***

**\*Hearing and Speech Disabled: Federal Relay Service 1-800-877-8339**