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OSC Seeks Corrective Action for Whistleblower Wrongfully Fired by Interior Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C./August 28, 2018 – The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) today announced it has filed a whistleblower retaliation complaint with the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) against the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI). The complaint alleges DOI removed Jeffrey Missal, a Regional Environmental Officer based in Anchorage, Alaska, in retaliation for his protected whistleblower disclosures and Inspector General complaint.

Mr. Missal filed a complaint with OSC alleging his removal occurred in retaliation for his disclosure that DOI violated environmental regulations to facilitate oil exploration in the Arctic Ocean. Beginning in 2012, Mr. Missal repeatedly disclosed these concerns within his chain of command. Feeling his internal complaints had gone unresolved, Mr. Missal filed a complaint with the DOI Inspector General.

In 2014, a senior DOI employee launched an investigation into Mr. Missal for unspecified misconduct on the same day that employee was informed of the Inspector General's inquiry. Then in 2016, DOI removed Mr. Missal from his employment based on alleged misconduct uncovered during that investigation, until OSC successfully petitioned MSPB to stay his removal.

In October 2017, OSC determined that DOI's investigation of Mr. Missal was launched in retaliation for his whistleblowing and sought corrective action through a formal *Report of Prohibited Personnel Practice*. After DOI declined to provide the requested corrective action, OSC filed a complaint with the MSPB to compel the agency to comply.

"Whistleblowers must have confidence they can report wrongdoing without facing retaliation," Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner said. "OSC is committed to restoring that confidence by holding agencies accountable when they violate whistleblowers' rights."

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: The Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.