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OSC Secures Relief for Bonneville Power Administration Whistleblowers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) obtained settlements for several whistleblowers at the Energy Department's Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), worked with BPA to discipline two supervisors engaged in hiring violations, and assisted a veteran who was disadvantaged by a hiring violation. The whistleblowers alleged retaliation for disclosing widespread hiring violations at BPA, which adversely impacted veterans and other applicants. The whistleblower disclosures sparked a congressional [hearing](#) and an Energy Department Office of Inspector General (OIG) [probe](#).

"Whistleblowers were key to uncovering hiring offenses that adversely affected veterans at the Bonneville Power Administration, and they deserve praise for bravely speaking up," said Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. "The Bonneville Power Administration should also be commended for taking steps to provide relief to the whistleblowers and to correct its past wrongs in order to move forward."

In its settlements with the whistleblowers, BPA provided full relief to four BPA employees.

OSC determined that a former BPA human resources director had primary responsibility for the hiring violations and acts of retaliation. However, the human resources director retired from federal service during the OSC and OIG investigations. OSC also concluded that disciplinary action should be taken against two other human resources supervisors because they were complicit in the hiring violations. BPA took disciplinary action against these two supervisors. The supervisors voluntarily left their supervisory positions before discipline was taken.

Finally, OSC found that BPA violated federal rules and improperly excluded a veteran who was eligible for a hiring preference and was qualified for a position, but was not selected. BPA agreed to take full corrective action by appointing the veteran to the position with full back pay.

Note: This press release was corrected on April 9, 2015, to better reflect confirmed findings regarding the hiring violations, to clarify that only OSC determined the former HR director engaged in retaliation, and that the two supervisors voluntarily left their supervisory roles.

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.