



Office of the Inspector General
July 30, 2021

National Whistleblower Appreciation Day

Dear AmeriCorps Colleagues,

Today, federal agencies across the government observe National Whistleblower Appreciation Day, paying tribute to people who had the courage to speak up, hold the government accountable, and protect the interests of Americans. AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General (AmeriCorps OIG) relies on whistleblowers to report waste, fraud, and abuse in AmeriCorps programs and operations. Like all federal employees, AmeriCorps personnel are required by law (as well as by AmeriCorps policy) to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, and abuse and are protected from retaliation for doing so. We want you to understand the rights and protections associated with whistleblowing.

- ***Federal law defines whistleblowing as the disclosure of information that an employee “reasonably believes evidences: a violation of any law, rule or regulation; gross mismanagement; gross waste of funds; an abuse of authority; a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or censorship related to scientific research or analysis.”***
- ***It is a prohibited personnel practice for anyone to retaliate against a federal employee for whistleblowing.***
- ***Federal job applicants, personal services contractors and employees of contractors, subcontractors, and grantees (including sub-grantees in some cases) are also protected from retaliation.***

Information and resources regarding these rights can be found on the [AmeriCorps OIG](#) website.

AmeriCorps employees have many channels for disclosing wrongdoing, including, but not limited to, supervisors or agency managers or officials; [AmeriCorps OIG’s Hotline](#); [AmeriCorps OIG’s Whistleblower Protection Coordinator](#); Members of Congress and Congressional Committees; [the Office of Special Counsel](#); and/or the [Merit Systems Protection Board](#). For more information about available alternatives for making

whistleblower disclosures, see the Office of Special Counsel’s “[Know Your Rights When Reporting Wrongs](#).” In addition, “[Your Rights as a Federal Employee](#)” provides detailed information on prohibited personnel practices and employees’ associated rights.

Remedies available to whistleblowers who have suffered retaliation now include compensatory damages, along with consequential damages and attorney fees. Moreover, an agency head must take disciplinary action against a supervisor who retaliates against a whistleblower or retaliates against an employee for exercising their grievance rights. By law, the protection of whistleblowers must be evaluated as a critical performance element for supervisors. Finally, agencies must inform each new employee of the rights and remedies available under Section 2302 of Title 5, no later than 180 days after the date on which the employee is appointed.

AmeriCorps has long expressed a commitment to the rights of all personnel to communicate freely with AmeriCorps OIG about AmeriCorps-related matters and to protecting such whistleblowers from retaliation. AmeriCorps’s Acting CEO, Mal Coles, recently [reiterated these commitments](#) in a March 30 email to AmeriCorps staff. In addition, these principles are embedded in Policy 102, [Reporting Waste, Fraud, and Abuse, and Cooperating with the Office of Inspector General \(OIG\) Inquiries](#). This policy expressly authorizes AmeriCorps staff to report suspected misconduct directly to AmeriCorps OIG, makes clear that AmeriCorps OIG will take appropriate measures to protect the identity of anyone who does so, and prohibits retaliation. (Policy 102, Sections 3 and 5.)

Ensuring that you understand your rights and protections as a potential whistleblower is one way that we salute the courage of others who stood against fraud, waste, and abuse by reporting it, thereby protecting the American people and taxpayer funds. Under federal law and AmeriCorps policy, you have the absolute right to communicate with AmeriCorps OIG freely, in confidence and without interference, scrutiny, or reprisal. You have our solemn assurance that we welcome, respect, and support whistleblowers and work hard to vindicate them.

Stephen Ravas, Counsel to the Inspector General and OIG Whistleblower Coordinator



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