

**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

**Memorandum**

Date: February 13, 2012

From: Secretary (00)

Subj: Protection from Reprisal for Whistleblowing

To: To All Employees

1. I want to reiterate and reaffirm VA's commitment to whistleblower protection and creating an environment in which employees feel free to voice their legitimate concerns without fear of reprisal. There are several avenues of redress available for employees to address reprisal for whistleblowing, including reporting it to VA's Office of Inspector General, your local Congressional representative, Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Office of Special Counsel. A summary of these venues and contact information is attached.

2. It is a prohibited personnel practice for an agency to subject an employee to a personnel action if the action is threatened, proposed, taken, or not taken because of whistleblowing activities. Whistleblowing means disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. An employee is protected if he/she makes such a disclosure to the Special Counsel or the Inspector General. Additionally, an employee is protected if he/she makes such a disclosure to any other individual or organization, such as a Congressional Committee or the media, provided that the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law.

3. Protecting employee rights is a statutory obligation. Managers and supervisors have a responsibility and will be held accountable for enforcing standards of appropriate workplace behavior, and are expected to take prompt action to deal with any conduct identified as reprisal based on whistleblowing. This includes the taking of appropriate disciplinary action, ranging from a 10-day suspension to removal in accordance with the Agency's Table of Penalties, when the circumstances warrant.

4. I encourage each of you to familiarize yourself with this information and I remind every manager of this Department's responsibility to maintain a workplace that respects its employee's ability and right to raise legitimate concerns without fear of retribution.

5. If you have questions regarding this subject, please contact Tonya Deanes, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management, at (202) 461-7765.



Eric K. Shinseki

Attachment