

Accountability Report Card Summary 2022
Idaho

Idaho has an average state whistleblower law:

- Scoring only 58 out of a possible 100 points; and
- Ranking 26th out of 51 (50 states and the District of Columbia).

Idaho has moderately narrow coverage (12 out of 33 possible points) with a very good degree of usability (26 out of 33) and fairly good remedies (19 out of 33), plus the one bonus point awarded for employee notification of rights.

Idaho's full Whistleblower Report Card
Narrative summary of Idaho's law

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Idaho Accountability Index Report card

Coverage, Usability & Strength — Rating on a 100 Point Scale

Idaho Protection of Public Employees Act- Idaho Code § 6-2101 to -2109 (1994)

A. Breadth of Coverage (33 points possible from 10 factors).

Does the statute cover disclosures of –

Factor	Maximum Points	Awarded Points
1. Violation of state or federal law, rules or regulations	6 points	6 points ¹
2. Gross mismanagement	3 points	0 points
3. Abuse of authority (including violations of agency policy)	3 points	0 points
4. Waste of public funds or resources	3 points	3 points
5. Danger to health and/or public safety and/or environment	5 points	0 points
6. Communication of scientific opinion or alteration of technical findings	5 points	0 points
7. Breaches of professional ethical canons	5 points	0 points

Does the statute provide –

8. Employee may refuse to carry out illegal or improper orders	1 point	1 point ²
9. Prohibition on “gag orders” to prevent employee disclosures	1 point	1 point ³
10. Whistleblower protection does not preclude collective bargaining or other rights	1 point	1 point ⁴
	<u>Maximum Score</u> <u>33 points</u>	<u>Awarded Score</u> <u>12 points</u>

¹ “An employer may not take adverse action against an employee because the employee, or a person authorized to act on behalf of the employee, communicates in good faith the existence of any waste of public funds, property or manpower, or a violation or suspected violation of a law, rule or regulation adopted under the law of this state, a political subdivision of this state or the United States. Idaho Code § 6-2104(1)(a).

² Statute protects employees who refuse to “carry out a directive that the employee reasonably believes violates a federal or state law, rule, or regulation.” Idaho Code § 6-2104(3).

³ An employer may not implement rules or policies that unreasonably restrict an employee to document the existence of waste of public funds, property, or manpower, or suspected violation of any laws, rules or regulations. Idaho Code § 6-2104(4).

⁴ Protections under the whistleblower statute do not interfere with or diminish rights under a collective bargaining agreement. Idaho Code § 6-2108.

B. Usability: Scope of Protection (33 points possible from 10 factors)

Do the laws protect disclosures made to –

Factor	Maximum Points	Awarded Points
1. Any person or organization, including public media	24 points	24 points ⁵

Or does the statute protect disclosures made to –

2. Any state executive or legislative body or person employed by such entities	4 points	0 points
3. Testimony in any official proceeding	4 points	0 points
4. Any state or federal law enforcement or investigative body or entity or its employees	3 points	0 points
5. Any federal or non-state governmental entity	3 points	0 points
6. Co-workers or supervisors within the scope of duty	3 points	0 points
7. Anyone as provided in paragraphs 2 thru 6 (above) without prior disclosure to another state official or supervisor	3 points	0 points

Does the state law –

8. Require an investigation by state auditor or other investigative entity of whistleblower disclosures	1 point	0 points
9. Have a statute of limitations of one year or longer for filing complaints	3 points (2 points if 6 months or longer and 1 point if 60 days or longer)	2 points ⁶
10. Allow qui tam or false claim actions for recovery of “bounty” in cases of fraud against the state	5 points (2 points if a qui tam statute of limited scope)	0 points
	<u>Maximum Score</u> <u>33 points</u>	<u>Awarded Score</u> <u>26 points</u>

⁵ Statute does not specify to whom a verbal or written report of violations or waste should be reported. The only stated restriction is that communication shall be made at a time and in a manner that gives the employer reasonable opportunity to correct the waste or violation. Idaho Code § 6-2104(1)(a). Also, Idaho legislature finds, determines, and declares that it is beneficial to the citizens of the state to protect the integrity of government by providing a legal cause of action for public employees who experience adverse action from their employer as a result of reporting waste and violations of law, rule, or regulation.

⁶ Action must be brought within 180 days of the violation. § 6-2105(2).

C. Strength: Remedies against retaliation (33 points possible from 11 factors)

Does the statute provide for –

Factor	Maximum Points	Awarded Points
1. Prohibition on retaliatory actions affecting a state employee's terms and conditions of employment	4 points	4 points
2. Opportunity for administrative challenge	4 points	0 points
3. Opportunities for court challenge	4 points	4 points ⁷
4. Trial by jury	3 points	0 points ⁸
5. Burden shifting upon prima facie showing.	1 point	0 points
6. Make whole remedies (court costs, attorney fees, back pay; restoration of benefits, etc.)	3 points	3 points ⁹
7. Actual/compensatory damages	3 points	3 points
8. Interim relief, injunction or stay of personnel actions	3 points	3 points ¹⁰
9. Transfer preference for prevailing whistleblower or ban on blackballing	3 points	0 points
10. Punitive damages or other fines and penalties	2 points	2 points ¹¹
11. Personnel actions against managers found to have retaliated	3 points	0 points
	<u>Maximum Score</u> 33 points	<u>Awarded Score</u> 19 points

Bonus Point (1 point): Posting or employee notice of whistleblower rights required.

Factor	Maximum Score	Awarded Score
Posting	1 point	1 point ¹²

Total points

100 points

58 points

⁷ Idaho Code § 6-2105.

⁸ Statute does not specify that a trial by jury would be available.

⁹ Idaho Code § 6-2106(2)-(5).

¹⁰ Idaho Code § 6-2106(1).

¹¹ A court may assess a civil fine of not more than \$500 on state employer for violation of prohibitions. Idaho Code § 6-2106(6).

¹² "An employer shall use appropriate means to notify its employees of their protection and obligation under this chapter." Idaho Code § 6-2109.

State Legislation Protecting State Employee Whistleblowers (updated July 2022)

State: Idaho

Statute: Idaho Protection of Public Employees Act—Idaho Code § 6-210-2109 (1994).

Provisions: The Idaho legislature finds, determines, and declares that government constitutes a large part of the Idaho work force and it is beneficial to the citizens of the state to protect the integrity of government by providing a legal cause of action for public employees who experience adverse action from their employer as a result of reporting waste and violations of law, rule, or regulation. “Adverse action” means to discharge, threaten, or otherwise discriminate against an employee in any manner concerning an employee’s employment, including compensation, and its terms and conditions.

An employer may not take an adverse action against an employee because (1) the employee, or a person authorized to act on his/her behalf, communicates in good faith the existence of any waste of public funds, property, or manpower or a violation or suspected violation of a federal or state law, rule or regulation; (2) an employee participates or communicates information in good faith in an investigation, hearing, court proceeding, legislative or other inquiry, or other form of administrative review concerning the existence of any waste of public funds, property, or manpower, or a violation or suspected violation of a law, rule or regulation adopted under the law of this state, a political subdivision of this state, or the United States; or (3) the employee has objected to or refused to carry out a directive that the employee reasonably believes violates a federal or state law, rule, or regulation. Communications shall be made at a time and in a manner that gives the employer a reasonable opportunity to correct the waste or violation. Good faith is lacking where the employee knew or reasonably should have known that the report was false or frivolous. The statute does not specify to whom a disclosure may be made.

For purposes of paragraph (a) of this subsection, an employee participates or communicates information in good faith if there is a reasonable basis in fact for the participation or the provision of the information. Good faith is lacking where the employee knew or reasonably ought to have known that the employee's participation or the information provided by the employee is malicious, false or frivolous.

An employee who alleges a violation of this statute may bring a civil action for injunctive relief and/or damages within 180 days of the occurrence of the alleged violation of this statute. “Damages” means damages for injury or loss caused by each violation and includes court costs and reasonable attorneys’ fees. To prevail in court the employee must establish, by the preponderance of the evidence, that the employee has suffered an adverse action because the employee, or someone acting on his/her behalf, engaged, or intended to engage, in an activity protected by the statute. A court may order, among other things, an injunction, the reinstatement of the employee to the same or equivalent position, reinstatement of lost wages and benefits, and the payment of the employee’s

reasonable costs of litigation. It may also fine the employer not more than \$500. A court may also order that reasonable attorneys' fee and court costs be awarded to an employer if the court finds that an action brought by an employee is without basis in law or fact. However, a judgment for noneconomic damages may not be entered for a claimant exceeding \$250,000 in damages. This limitation applies to the sum of noneconomic damages sustained by a claimant. Government entities and their employees shall not be liable for punitive damages on any claim.

The statute shall not impair or diminish an employee's rights under any collective bargaining agreement. An employer shall notify its employees of their protections and obligations under the statute, and may not implement rules or policies that unreasonably restrict the documentation of waste of public funds, property, or manpower, or suspected violation of any laws, rules or regulations.