

December 2, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer Senate
Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office
Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson Speaker
of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
2433 Rayburn House Office
Building Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson,
and Minority Leader Jeffries:

The undersigned 204 organizations committed to good government principles across political affiliations are united by our desire for accountability for taxpayer-funded government activities. We support credible free speech rights for whistleblowers who expose fraud, waste of funds or abuse of authority in federal spending. Whistleblowers serve as the public's eyes and ears.

However, the erosion of whistleblower rights amid the surge in government spending is deeply concerning, and we call on Congress to take urgent action.

Congress has approved over four trillion dollars in new federal spending since 2020, which marks an unprecedented surge in taxpayer funds to government contractors. Remarkably, the number of contractor employees paid through federal funds often surpasses the total number of civil service workers by two to three times. In fiscal year 2021 alone, contractor spending reached \$637 billion out of \$1.6 trillion in discretionary spending. That number swelled to \$726 billion in FY 2022, and \$759 billion in FY 2023.

In 2009, as part of an \$800 billion stimulus package, Congress passed robust whistleblower protections to prevent fraud in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which Inspectors General credited with minimizing fraud and corruption in ARRA spending. This time, however, Congress approved over four trillion dollars of new spending without updating the pioneer whistleblower rights that have eroded to the point of being false advertising.

Last year, Senators Peters and Braun introduced a strong, bi-partisan law that would restore and strengthen whistleblower protections for government contractors (S.1524 – Expanding Whistleblower Protections for Contractors Act of 2023). Despite a relentless campaign by contractors who have been prosecuted in the past for fraud, this past March the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee gave the reform a bi-partisan mandate with unanimous approval.

The vital shortcomings in the current government contractor whistleblower law that need repair include:

- International Misconduct: The law fails to protect whistleblowers from retaliation for reporting misconduct occurring internationally.
- Refusal to Violate the Law: Unlike civil service employees, government contractor workers lack protection against retaliation for refusing to violate the law.
- Limited Jury Trials: The law no longer guarantees jury trials for due process enforcement of anti-retaliation rights in certain states.
- Blocklisting: Whistleblowers remain unprotected against blocklisting (privately exchanging a list naming people to be barred from employment, or otherwise acting to block someone's employment opportunities).
- Unprotected Reprisals: The law does not shield whistleblowers from the increasingly frequent tactics of unconventional reprisals such as retaliatory civil SLAPP suits or criminal prosecutions, which have a severe chilling effect.
- Protection for Honest Contractors: The law does not protect honest contractors that report government bullying or competitor misconduct.
- Government Accountability for Retaliation: The law does not provide for government disciplinary accountability for those who retaliate against whistleblowers.
- Exclusion of Intelligence Community Contractors: The law excludes intelligence community contractors from protection.

Congress must not permit the deterioration of protection for those defending the public interest by blowing the whistle on fraud, waste and abuse of government funds. We implore members from both parties to translate their commitment to protecting taxpayers' interests into tangible action by bolstering whistleblower rights. By addressing these existing loopholes, Congress can provide whistleblowers with effective safeguards and ensure that those who protect the public can also defend themselves.

We stand together to reinforce accountability and uphold the values of transparency and integrity within government spending by strengthening whistleblower rights.

Sincerely,

350.org
Academics Stand Against Poverty
Accountability Lab
ACORN8
Action Center on Race and the Economy
Advocacy For Principled Action In Government
Affiliation of Christian Engineers

Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)
Al Otro Lado
Alabama Black Women's Roundtable
All About the Ballots
Alliance for Human Research Protection
Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO)
American Civil Liberties Union
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Oversight
American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa
Arab American Institute (AAI)
ARTICLE 19
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Borderlands Resource Initiative
California Communities Against Toxics
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Cause Communications
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry
Center for Ethnic Research
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Justice & Democracy
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Progressive Reform
Center for Public Safety for Women (CPSW)
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Centre for Law and Democracy
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Clean Elections Texas
Climate Reality Greater Maryland
Climate Science Legal Defense Fund
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Constitutional Alliance
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Crude Accountability
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
EarthRights International
EES Group, Inc
Elaine Mittleman
Elders Climate Action Maryland

End Citizens United//Let America Vote Action Fund
Equality Labs
Equity Forward
Essential Information
Faiths for Safe Water
Fix Democracy First
Fix the Court
Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics
Freedom for Eurasia
Freedom Network USA
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Friends of Angola
Friends of the Earth
Global Witness
Good Jobs First
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Green Plate Catering
Greenpeace USA
Hanford Challenge
Harrington Investments, Inc.
Human Rights First
Human, Environmental and Leadership Prevalent Center (HELP Center)
IFAW – International Fund for Animal Welfare
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Defense
Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy (ISLA)
Indivisible Santa Fe
Integrity Initiatives International
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
International Association of Whistleblowers
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health
Jobs to Move America
Just Detention International
Justice in Motion
Justice Integrity Project
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kosovo Law Institute
Lamplighter Project
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Lawyers for Equal Access to Advocacy & Dignity (LEAAD)
Liberty Shared
Ligue Camerounaise des droits humains
Maison des Organisations de la Société Civile (MOSC) Anjouan
Medical Device Problems

Metrowest Worker Center – Casa
Migrant Equity Southeast
Minnesota Freedom Fund
Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Montgomery County-Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Muslim American Law Enforcement Association (MALEA)
National Black Justice Coalition
National Black Worker Center
National Center for Health Research
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Council for Occupational Safety and Health
National Employment Law Project
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Freedom of Information Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Organization for Women
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
National Security Counselors
National Taxpayers Union
National Whistleblower Center
Network for Responsible Public Policy
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nia Impact Capital
No Business With Genocide
No More Guantánamos
Northwest Workers' Justice Project
NW Workers' Justice Project
NY Environmental Watch
Oasis Legal Services
Open Contracting Partnership
Open MIC
Open The Government
Oregonizers
OTAC
Our Bodies Ourselves
Oxfam America
Peace Action
People For the American Way
People Power United
People's Parity Project
Prisoners Legal Advocacy Network
Privacy Times
Professional Managers Association
Project On Government Oversight
Protect All Children's Environment

Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Public Justice Center
Public-Private Integrity
ReachScale
Reseau Nigerien des Defenseurs des Droits Humains (RNDDH)
Restore The Fourth
Revolving Door Project
Rivers Edge Pain relief
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Rock the Vote
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
RootsAction.org
Sciencecorps
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
SMART Elections
Society of Professional Journalists
SocioEnergetics Foundation
Sojourners
Southwest Research and Information Center
Stand Up America
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
The Coalition For Change, Inc (C4C)
The Chamberlain Network
The Digital Democracy Project
The Ecotopian Society
The Freedom BLOC
The Future We Need
The Information Trust
The Legacy of a Livable Planet, Inc.
The National Medical Malpractice Advocacy Association
The Signals Network
The Workers Circle
Third Act
Transparency International Taiwan
Transparency International US
Truckers Justice Center
Tulipshare
Tully Center for Free Speech
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Steelworkers (USW)
Vote Common Good
Walk the Talk Foundation

Washington Office on Latin America
We Are All America
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Whistleblowers of America
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Wisner Baum
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
Worker Justice Center of New York
Workplace Fairness
Workplace Justice Project, New Orleans
Worksafe
World BEYOND War
X-Lab