



Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General

News Release

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STATEMENT FROM VA INSPECTOR GENERAL MICHAEL MISSAL

Today is National Whistleblower Appreciation Day. We as a Nation must recognize the important role whistleblowers play in exposing serious problems and deficiencies in Government programs and operations. Only when employees, contractors, and the public come forward to report criminal activity, mismanagement, fraud, waste, or abuse can the organization's leadership begin to take steps to address and correct any exposed problems. In many cases, employees do not have a safe internal process to report such activities within their organization. In situations such as this, employees may confidentially report their concerns to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) or the Office of Inspector General that oversees their department or office.

At the Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG), we are committed to protecting the identity of any person who comes forward and reports serious allegations of criminal activity, fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. As VA's oversight agency, we will protect whistleblowers while we thoroughly investigate their concerns through all avenues available to us.

In December 2015, OSC certified OIG for meeting our obligation to inform our employees of their rights and remedies under the prohibited personnel practice and whistleblower protection provisions of chapters 12 and 23 of Title 5. In order to obtain this certification, OIG had to meet five broad requirements, one of which included employee training. To protect whistleblowers, VA OIG employees are trained on protections and remedies guaranteed to Federal employees by the *Whistleblower Protection Act*, the *Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act*, and related laws. OIG's Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman program provides education about protections for current or former employees of VA, VA contractors, or VA grantees who make protected disclosures.

We continue to work with VA and OSC to strengthen protections for whistleblowers. Providing a safe process to report issues, protecting whistleblowers and instituting changes resulting from disclosures makes VA better able to deliver services and benefits that our Nation's veterans have earned through their military service.

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