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Grassley Leads Bipartisan Group of Senators in Launching Whistleblower Protection Caucus

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WASHINGTON – To raise awareness of the need for adequate protections against retaliation for private sector and government employees who call attention to wrongdoing, Sen. Chuck Grassley today led a bipartisan group of senators in launching the Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus.

“As a long-time whistleblower advocate, I constantly hear from federal whistleblowers who are fearful of retaliation,” Grassley said. “Some of them have already been targeted for their actions. Much can be done to improve the environment for whistleblowers and actually encourage more people to step forward when they encounter wrongdoing. This group will help inform and equip our Senate colleagues to respond to the needs of these patriotic citizens who play a vital role in protecting against fraud, waste and misconduct.”

Grassley emphasized the ongoing need to stay abreast of whistleblower concerns. This week, a report from the independent Government Accountability Office documented serious obstacles facing whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Grassley plans to convene a hearing on the issue next week at the Judiciary Committee, which he chairs.

The caucus will foster bipartisan discussion on legislative issues affecting the treatment of whistleblowers and serve as a clearinghouse for current information on whistleblower developments of interest in the Senate. It will also coordinate training and consultation for any Senate office in need of assistance in responding to whistleblower disclosures or retaliation allegations.

The founding members of the whistleblower protection caucus are Grassley (chairman) and Sens. Ron Wyden of Oregon (vice chairman), Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, Mark Kirk of Illinois, Deb Fischer of Nebraska, Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Barbara Boxer of California, Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, and Ed Markey of Massachusetts.

Grassley is the co-author of the 1986 whistleblower amendments to the False Claims Act, making it one of the government’s most powerful tools against fraud. He is the author of the law beefing up the Internal Revenue Service’s whistleblower office. Over the years, he has taken up for numerous whistleblowers facing retaliation or other hardship within their agencies.

Several high profile whistleblowers, including several who have worked with Grassley, attended today’s announcement. They included:

Fred Whitehurst

Dr. Whitehurst is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Whistleblower Center and a former Supervisory Special Agent with the FBI who began blowing the whistle on the FBI crime lab in 1989. Dr. Whitehurst's case prompted President Clinton to issue an order requiring the Department of Justice to enact whistleblower protections for all FBI employees.

Robert MacLean

Mr. MacLean is a former federal air marshal who raised concerns regarding a decision to remove air marshals from long distance flights during a confirmed terrorist alert. A bipartisan group of senators and representatives, including Sens. Grassley and Wyden, filed an amicus brief in support of Mr. MacLean's claim of retaliation, arguing that disclosures by federal employees are protected under the Whistleblower Protection Act unless the disclosure is specifically prohibited by statute, not merely agency rulemaking. The Supreme Court agreed in *Department of Homeland Security v. MacLean*.

John Dodson

Mr. Dodson is a Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives. Mr. Dodson first reported to Senator Grassley allegations of gunwalking in Operation Fast and Furious and its connection to the death of Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry. He later testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform about the scandal.

Pete Forcelli

Mr. Forcelli is a Supervisory Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives. He settled a retaliation claim with the Office of Special Counsel after he testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform regarding Department of Justice management failures in connection with Operation Fast and Furious.

Video of Grassley at the news conference is available [here](#).

