

June 14, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Owen McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders,

The undersigned organizations write to seek your leadership protecting law enforcement personnel with best practices anti-retaliation rights in any police reform legislation. Unenforceable laws can intensify community backlash, because they are magnets for cynicism and resentment. That is why Congress included whistleblower protection in over 60 federal remedial laws, including 16 times unanimously since the millennium. Now the same standards must be applied in police bills for those reforms to be credible.

The truth is changing the course of history. Unfortunately, accountability in law enforcement remains a major challenge. Accountability-free abuses of power have become a way of life. For current reform proposals to work as intended, they must have effective measures protecting those who bear witness to enforce the law against law enforcement officers who break it. Video footage has led to a national reckoning, but it takes more than a smartphone to defend freedom. In many cases it requires testimony from those willing to bear witness. The only witnesses are often fellow officers.

However, the “blue wall of silence,” compounded by the lack of anti-retaliation protection for law enforcement, forces law enforcement officers to risk their careers, safety, or even their lives when they choose to blow the whistle. That is why we are asking Congress to include whistleblower rights in police reform bills.

How can whistleblowers make a difference enforcing police reforms? Their testimony could turn citizen rights into reality for major safeguards such as:

- the ban on chokeholds;
- controls on other deadly force;
- expanded liability;
- pattern and practice investigations;
- oversight of mandatory body cameras;
- restrictions on no knock warrants;
- controls on transfer of military equipment to state and local police;
- open and transparent forensic crime laboratory operations;
- accurate and complete information for a national registry; and
- an oversight record based on the whole truth for all oversight and enforcement.

Whistleblowing for law enforcement is “committing the truth,” because they are treated as if they had committed a crime. But the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is the foundation for legitimate reform. There can be no higher priority than protecting those who provide it.

Sincerely,

ACORN8

Agape Healing Hearts

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas

American Civil Liberties Union

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.

Constitutional Alliance

Consumer Action

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Defending Rights & Dissent

Farmworker Association of Florida

Food & Water Action

FracTracker Alliance

Government Accountability Project

Government Information Watch

Hispanic Federation

NAACP

National Association of Social Workers

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Security Counselors

National Whistleblower Center

National Workrights Institute

Open The Government

PCUN

People For the American Way

Public Citizen

Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Tully Center for Free Speech
Whistleblowers of America
Woodhull Freedom Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Jerry Nadler,
Chair, U.S. House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Jim Jordan,
Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney,
Chair, U.S. House Oversight and Reform Committee

The Honorable, Jim Jordan
Ranking Member, U.S. House Oversight and Reform Committee

The Honorable Lindsey Graham,
Chair, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Ron Johnson,
Chair, U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

The Honorable Gary Peters,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Members of the U.S. Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus Members of the U.S. House
Whistleblower Protection Caucus