

June 14, 2020 (Updated August 4, 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

Advocating Opportunity

Agape Healing Hearts

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas

American Civil Liberties Union

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Centro de los Derechos del Migrante, Inc.

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Constitutional Alliance

Consumer Action

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Defending Rights & Dissent

Demand Progress

Dialysis Advocates & Associates

ECI Communications

Essential Information

Equal Rights Advocates

Farmworker Association of Florida

Food & Water Action

FracTracker Alliance

Freedom Network USA

Global Integrity

Government Accountability Project

Government Information Watch

HIPS  
Hispanic Federation  
IAW  
Jobs with Justice of East Tennessee  
NAACP  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Security Counselors  
National Whistleblower Center  
National Workrights Institute  
Open The Government  
Pax Advisory  
PCUN  
People For the American Way  
Project On Government Oversight  
Public Citizen  
Public Justice  
RAICES  
Rural Coalition  
Tahirih Justice Center  
Taxpayers Protection Alliance  
The Multiracial Activist  
The Rutherford Institute  
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 Congressional Black Caucus

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