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U.S. Senate: Floor Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley on

May 14th, 2007

Mr. President, I announce today the kick-off of Whistleblower Week in Washington. This week and the events surrounding it are designed to promote, celebrate and educate Congress and the public about the courage and patriotism of whistleblowers.

These individuals often risk their careers to expose fraud, waste, and abuse in an effort to protect not only the health and safety of the American people, but the federal treasury and taxpayer dollars.

This week's events promoting and celebrating whistleblowers are important for all members of Congress and for the public as well. By highlighting what whistleblowers do, we provide insight into what it means to be a whistleblower and the important role they play in government and society.

For over two decades, I've learned from, appreciated and honored whistleblowers. Congress needs to make a special note of the role that whistleblowers play in helping us fulfill our Constitutional duty of conducting oversight of the Executive Branch. As a Senator, I've conducted extensive oversight into virtually all aspects of the federal bureaucracy.

Despite the differences in cases from agency to agency and department to department, one constant remains: the need for information and insight from whistleblowers.

This information is vital to effective Congressional oversight. Documents alone are insufficient when it comes to understanding a dysfunctional bureaucracy. Only whistleblowers can explain why something is wrong and provide the best evidence to prove it. Moreover, only whistleblowers can help us truly understand problems with the culture at government agencies.

Whistleblowers have been instrumental in uncovering \$700 being spent on toilet seats at the Department of Defense. These American heroes were also critical in our learning about how the FDA missed the boat and approved Vioxx, how government contracts were inappropriately steered at the GSA, or how Enron was cooking the books and ripping off investors. Courageous employees blew the whistle and shed much needed sunshine on problems that would otherwise never see the light of day.

Like all whistleblowers, each whistleblower in these cases demonstrated tremendous courage. They stuck their necks out for the good of all of us. They spoke the truth. They didn't take the easy way out by going along to get along, or looking the other way, when they saw wrongdoing. The whistleblower who I call the grandfather of all whistleblowers -- Ernie Fitzgerald - says that whistleblowers are guilty of "committing truth." For doing so, they're about as welcome as a skunk at a Sunday afternoon picnic.

I've said it for many years without avail, but I'd like to see the President of the United States have a Rose Garden ceremony honoring whistleblowers. This would send a message from the very top of

the bureaucracy about the importance and value of whistleblowers. They deserve it, and we all ought to be grateful for what they do and appreciate the very difficult circumstances they often have to endure to do so, sacrificing their family's finances, their employability, and the attempts by powerful interests to smear their good names and intentions.

Earlier today I had the opportunity to speak at a panel that gathered to discuss the plight of whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These individuals discussed the hurdles they faced in exposing the truth. Further, they discussed the lengths at which some bureaucrats will go to prevent the truth from coming out.

Unfortunately, these former agents also discussed a culture that keeps problems internal and circles the wagons when things go wrong. Often times this culture shoots the whistleblower instead of addressing the problem.

Mr. President, retaliation against whistleblowers should not be tolerated. We have an obligation to ensure that those who retaliate are punished.

Congress has recognized the need to protect whistleblowers and I have used my experience working with whistleblowers to promote legislation that protects them from retaliation. Legislation such as the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, and the False Claims Act recognize the benefits of whistleblowers and offer protection to those seeking to uncover the truth. For example, whistleblowers have used the False Claims Act to help the federal government recover nearly \$20 billion since Congress passed my amendments to it in 1986.

These laws are a good step, however, our work in this field is unfinished and more can be done.

The next step in protecting whistleblowers was filed in January and is currently pending before this body. S.274 – the Federal Employee Protection of Disclosures Act – will provide much needed updates to federal whistleblower protections. I'm proud to have been an original cosponsor of S.274 and believe the Senate should move this important legislation. Unfortunately, this bill was introduced but not addressed in the 109th Congress. It is my hope that this chamber will act on S.274 and improve protections for whistleblowers.

Mr. President, I urge all my colleagues to join in support of S.274 and swiftly move this important legislation to help protect whistleblowers. I also urge all my colleagues to attend the events that are occurring all week to help celebrate whistleblowers and all they have done to benefit the work of Congress and more importantly, all they have done to make America a safer, stronger, and better nation. I yield the floor.