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House Passes Whistleblower Protection Legislation

WASHINGTON – Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY) released the following remarks in support of S. 372, the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2010. Chairman Towns is an original co-sponsor of H.R. 1507, the bipartisan companion bill to S. 372, introduced in the house last year by Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). The House passed the legislation today.

Text of Chairman Towns’ remarks:

As Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I rise in strong support of S. 372, the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2010.

I want to congratulate Senator Akaka and the other Senate sponsors of S. 372 for their efforts. I commend the persistence they have demonstrated in championing this good government bill.

I'm proud to be an original co-sponsor of H.R. 1507, the bipartisan companion bill to S. Hollen and all the co-sponsors of H.R. 1507, including Mr. Platts of Pennsylvania. They have demonstrated exceptional leadership in support of government whistleblowers.

This legislation is long overdue. Different versions of this legislation have been introduced in every Congress for the last 12 years.

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The Oversight Committee has long-recognized that enhancing whistleblower protections will help the Congress to fulfill its role in bringing about more honest, accountable, and effective government for the American people.

Federal employees are often the first to witness abuses or misconduct that presents a risk to the taxpayers. Providing strong protections for those who disclose misconduct helps to promote a more accountable and transparent federal bureaucracy. This legislation provides a means of securing justice to those individuals who are punished for doing the right thing.

[During Committee hearings on this legislation](#) , we heard from courageous government workers who risked their careers to promote the common good.

Mr. Franz Gayl, a civilian employee in the Marines Corps, testified about the retaliation he faced. Mr. Gayl blew the whistle on significant delays in the acquisition process -- delays that were costing Marines their lives in Iraq. Defense Secretary Gates ultimately agreed with the proposals put forth by Mr. Gayl on troop protection.

However, Mr. Gayl remains at risk of losing his job.

This bill will help Mr. Gayl, and many others like him.

We have heard from dozens of whistleblowers who support this bill. I want to acknowledge one in particular.

Mr. Robert Maclean is a former Federal Air Marshal who was fired after disclosing a threat to aviation safety.

Mr.

MacLean's case has been lingering for far too long under the current system.

He has championed this bill because he knows first hand that the current system is broken.

I thank him for his efforts on behalf of the country.

As many of you remember, the House of Representatives passed similar legislation by a 331-94 vote in the 110th Congress. The House also unanimously passed whistleblower protections as

an amendment to the Recovery Act at the beginning of this Congress.

Unfortunately, that amendment was stripped out in conference with the Senate.

After a long process in the Senate, this bill comes before the House for a third time. I am pleased the House-Senate compromise we are considering includes important provisions from the House bill.

For the first time, the bill will allow federal workers the right to a jury trial in Federal Court under some circumstances.

The legislation we're considering today is a good compromise. However, I'm disappointed that the Senate did not agree to extend similar whistleblower protections to government contractors.

I am also disappointed that we could not come to an agreement with the Republican side on extending protections to employees in the Intelligence Community.

In spite of the bill's imperfections and limitations, I wholeheartedly endorse this agreement. This is a good government bill that will help to curb waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government.

I encourage the Senate to act quickly on our modifications, and send the bill to President Obama without further delay.

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