

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings

Office of Special Counsel Reauthorization Act

March 1, 2016

I strongly support the Office of Special Counsel Reauthorization Act of 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for working with me and my staff in a bipartisan manner to develop this bill.

The Office of Special Counsel serves a critical role for the federal government. OSC protects federal employees, especially whistleblowers, from prohibited personnel practices. OSC also serves as a safe place for federal whistleblowers to disclose wrongdoing.

The statutory authorization for this agency ended in fiscal year 2007, and reauthorization is long overdue.

This bill would reauthorize OSC through fiscal year 2020.

The current Special Counsel, Carolyn Lerner, has done a superb job of leading OSC to be an effective investigative body.

This bill would make changes that will help OSC conduct investigations and to hold agencies accountable when wrongdoing is identified.

For example, the bill would provide OSC with statutory authority to obtain information from agencies during an investigation.

We saw one of the most egregious examples of agency resistance when the former Chairman of the Chemical Safety Board refused to even provide a privilege log to OSC during an investigation of retaliation against an employee.

Providing statutory authority to OSC would send a message to agencies that they must cooperate in the same way Congress expects agencies to cooperate with Inspectors General and GAO.

This bill would also increase accountability for agencies when allegations of misconduct are substantiated.

Agencies that fail to implement a recommendation made by OSC would be required to explain why they have failed to take such actions.

Mr. Chairman, this is a good bill, and I look forward to working with you and the other Members of the Committee to make sure it is enacted before the end of this Congress.

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