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Sen. asks if FBI will punish those who retaliated against agent

By FREDERIC J. FROMMER

Associated Press Writer

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WASHINGTON - One of the Senate's most vocal defenders of government whistleblowers wants to know if the FBI plans to discipline agents who a court found had retaliated against a Minneapolis agent who filed a sexual-discrimination complaint.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, sent the letter to FBI Director Robert S. Mueller on Monday regarding the case of Minneapolis agent Jane Turner, who recently won a \$565,000 judgment against the agency.

"Given that her allegations have now been substantiated, I am writing to you for information about how you intend to hold supervisors accountable for the acts of retaliation," Grassley wrote in a letter to Mueller. Grassley's office released the letter Tuesday.

FBI spokeswoman Cathy Milhoan would only say that the agency has received the letter and will prepare a response.

Turner accused male FBI agents of mishandling cases of sexual abuse in Indian Country and alleged her superiors transferred her from Minot, N.D., to Minneapolis in retaliation for complaints about sexual discrimination.

Turner, who retired in 2003, also had a separate dispute with the FBI after she accused colleagues of stealing a Tiffany crystal globe from the World Trade Center ruins. Grassley had rallied to Turner's side over that issue as well.

In this week's letter to Mueller, Grassley asked how many FBI supervisors have been disciplined for retaliation over the past five years and what discipline will be taken against those who were involved in the actions against Turner.

He also asks about the role of three specific supervisory special agents in the Turner case, and whether the FBI plans to discipline them.

"Now that a jury has substantiated retaliation by the FBI in this case, I am anxious to find out what the FBI will do to demonstrate that your commitment to protecting FBI whistleblowers is more than just words," Grassley wrote. "Unless retaliators are held accountable, the FBI culture will not change."

He asked for a response by March 7.

In a statement, Grassley said: "It's time for the supervisors who retaliated against Jane Turner, and any other whistleblower for that matter, (to) be held accountable."

On Feb. 5, a jury awarded Turner \$60,000 in damages for lost wages and \$505,000 for emotional distress. According to one of her attorneys, Robert Hill, a statutory cap on monetary damages will require the judge to reduce the \$505,000 to \$300,000 - so she will get \$360,000.

Records show Turner was rated superior or exceptional in her job reviews until she filed a sex discrimination complaint against her supervisor.

"I'm deeply honored to have Senator Grassley's strong and unwavering support," Turner said Tuesday. "Senior managers in the FBI, by feeling they are a law unto themselves, are losing the legal and moral authority for the FBI."