



February 22, 2021

Honorable Gerry Connolly
Chair, Subcommittee on Government
Operations, House Oversight and Reform Comm
2308 Rayburn House Office Building

Honorable Jody Hice
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Government Operations, House
Oversight and Reform Comm. 2506
Rayburn House Office Building2

RE: Merit Systems Protection Board Empowerment Act of 2021 (Empowerment Act)

Dear Chair Connolly and Ranking Member Hice:

The National Whistleblower Center, a non-profit organization devoted to protecting whistleblowers for over 30 years, strongly supports the Merit Systems Protection Board Empowerment Act of 2021 (Empowerment Act). This bipartisan legislation finally reauthorizes the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) and strengthens the Board's ability to achieve its mission of protecting federal employees and whistleblowers.

The Empowerment Act contains four key improvements:

1. *Reauthorizes the MSPB through 2026, which will help ensure that it protects federal employees for the next half decade.*
2. *Allows the MSPB to conduct employee surveys, which would help to ensure that agencies are following merit system principles for the competitive civil service and potentially identify where improvements are necessary.*
3. *Enables the MSPB to collect information on applicants for federal employment, when not prohibited by existing law.*
4. *Requires successful completion of whistleblower training for MSPB members, administrative judges, and other applicable employees.*

The inclusion of whistleblower training is of particular import to NWC. Congress has long recognized that whistleblowers are essential for rooting out waste, fraud and abuse and ensuring that our federal government carries out its Congressional mandates. Federal laws protecting whistleblowers are numerous, complex and constantly evolving. To effectively protect federal whistleblowers, administrative judges, MSPB members and other Board employees need the training that is part of this bill.

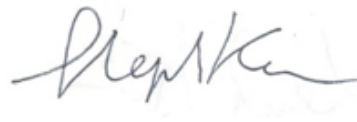
We applaud you for your leadership in introducing the Empowerment Act, an important step in protecting federal employee whistleblowers.

As you know, the MSPB's failure to carry out its mission over the last four years has resulted in an unprecented backlog of personnel cases. NWC urges the Subcommittee to report out the Empower Act favorably so that the bill can move toward enactment as expeditiously as practical.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Kostyack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Kostyack
Executive Director
National Whistleblower Center

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen M. Kohn". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "S" and a long horizontal stroke.

Stephen M. Kohn
Chairman of the Board
National Whistleblower Center