

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on “Whistleblower Retaliation at the FBI: Improving Protections and Oversight”
March 4, 2015**

Today, the Committee holds an important hearing to examine how the Federal Bureau of Investigation handles whistleblower disclosures. Senator Grassley and I have worked together on these issues for many years, and I look forward to continuing that work.

Government whistleblowers serve an essential role in providing accountability. It is important that *all* government employees are provided with strong and effective avenues to come forward with evidence of government waste, fraud and abuse. To ensure that whistleblowers will come forward when they discover wrongdoing, they must be protected from retaliation.

One of our witnesses today – Michael German – knows retaliation far too well. More than a decade ago, he was forced to end his distinguished career at the FBI by coming to Congress and exposing serious deficiencies in the FBI’s handling of counterterrorism investigations. He chose to do this after making a protected whistleblower disclosure at the FBI that went nowhere. Rather than acting on the genuine problems he identified at the Bureau – the very same kind of insularity and mismanagement identified by the 9/11 Commission as a major failing – he was marginalized and mistreated. The effective counterterrorism work done by Mr. German that won criminal convictions against terrorists was cast aside simply because he dared to speak out.

Unfortunately, two recent government reports – one, by the Department of Justice, and another, by the Government Accountability Office -- highlight the obstacles that remain for FBI employees to appropriately blow the whistle and seek protection from retaliation.

In light of these reports, I want to thank both panels of witnesses for being here today to testify about these significant issues. I look forward to hearing their ideas to strengthen whistleblower protections and to ensure that corrective actions are available to the brave men and women who put their livelihoods at risk by exposing government wrongdoing.

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