



Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

July 12, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND
U.S. MAIL

John P. Sheridan
Sheridan Law Firm, P.S.
Hoge Building, Suite 1200
705 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104
Jack@SheridanLawFirm.com

Re: Retaliation Complaint of Aleta Busselman
against Battelle Memorial Institute, OIG Case
No. 17-0001-W

Dear Mr. Sheridan:

This letter is in reference to the whistleblower retaliation complaint you filed on behalf of your client, Ms. Aleta Busselman, with the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Inspector General (DOE OIG) pursuant to 41 U.S.C. Section 4712, Enhancement of Contractor Protection from Reprisal for Disclosure of Certain Information (hereafter identified as Section 4712).

Section 4712 prohibits reprisal against an employee of an agency contractor, subcontractor, or grantee for disclosing information that the employee reasonably believes is evidence of gross mismanagement of a Federal contract or grant, a gross waste of Federal funds, an abuse of authority relating to a Federal contract or grant, a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, or a violation of law, rule, or regulation related to a Federal contract (including the competition for or negotiation of a contract) or grant. Section 4712 also requires that the Inspector General investigate a reprisal complaint, unless the complaint is determined to be frivolous, fails to allege a violation of the prohibitions stated above, or has previously been addressed in another Federal or State judicial or administrative proceeding initiated by the complainant.

Pursuant to the authority of Section 4712, DOE OIG has analyzed the complaint you filed on behalf of Ms. Busselman and has gathered additional information regarding her allegations. Based on the information available, we have decided to initiate an investigation into Ms. Busselman's allegations of whistleblower retaliation against her employer, Battelle Memorial Institute (Battelle). Our review will be an independent investigation and we are not acting as an agent on Ms. Busselman's behalf. The DOE OIG will begin gathering information for analysis via document requests and witness interviews. DOE OIG staff plans to interview Ms. Busselman, selected individuals employed by Battelle and possibly others who may have

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knowledge of the matter under investigation. The DOE OIG will also collect relevant documentary information as part of the investigation.

The following is a brief summary of the allegations that we plan to investigate:

Ms. Busselman alleges that she made protected disclosures to management of Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) related to pressure she received from managers to make changes to a root cause analysis report concerning a December 2016 improper payment by PNNL of \$530,000 to a fraudulent entity. Ms. Busselman also alleges that, on April 11, 2017, in retaliation for making those disclosures, and refusing to make changes to the report, she was removed from her position as Division Director and Battelle /PNNL Enforcement Coordinator, assigned to a non-existent “special assignment” without specified duties, and informed that she would be responsible for finding a new work assignment prior to October 1, 2017.

It is possible that the information we gather during our investigation will lead us to look into additional matters.

If you disagree with our identification of the issues to be investigated, or believe that additional allegations should be included in our review, please contact Special Agent Elisabeth Heller at (202) 586-0037, or by email at elisabeth.heller@hq.doe.gov. If you wish to provide the DOE OIG with additional information or documentary evidence regarding your allegations, or if you wish to recommend that we interview specific witnesses regarding the matters under investigation, please do so as expeditiously as possible, but no later than August 11, 2017. If you recommend specific witnesses, please provide a short summary of what you expect the witness to tell us.

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions regarding the processing of this complaint, or if additional time is necessary to provide additional information, please feel free to contact Special Agent Heller at the number listed above.

Sincerely,



Virginia Grebasch
Counsel to the Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Department of Energy