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For Immediate Release

Platts Legislation to Strengthen Whistleblower Protection for Federal Employees Passes House Government Reform Committee

Bill would help eliminate waste, fraud and abuse within the federal government.

Washington, D.C. – “The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (H.R. 3281),” a bipartisan bill which seeks to restore protections for federal employees who report illegalities, gross mismanagement and waste, and dangers to the public health and safety, unanimously passed the House Government Reform Committee today. H.R. 3281 was introduced last year by Congressman Todd Platts (PA-19). This legislation is the House companion to a bill already introduced in the United States Senate (S. 2628) by Senators Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Charles Grassley (R-IA), which was approved unanimously by the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on July 21, 2004.

“Being a whistleblower takes courage,” Congressman Platts says. “Reporting waste, fraud and abuse within the federal government should not result in harassment, a damaged career, or the loss of income or employment altogether. It is important for potential whistleblowers to feel that, if they come forward, they are truly protected by federal law.”

The bill would amend the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) in response to a series of decisions by the Federal Circuit Court, which have weakened the WPA. The Federal Circuit

Court has sole authority to review cases under the WPA. The Federal Circuit has stated in various cases that:

- An employee is not protected by the WPA if he or she directs criticism to the wrong-doer instead of to a higher authority.
- An employee is not protected by the WPA if the information disclosed was done so in the course of his or her duties.
- An employee is not protected by the WPA if the information disclosed is already known.

“The Whistleblower Enhancement Act” would make it clear that any disclosure of information is protected “without restriction to time, place, form, motive, context, or prior disclosure made to any person by an employee or applicant, including a disclosure made in the ordinary course of an employee’s duties.”

“I look forward to working with Senators Akaka and Grassley, and my colleagues in the House on this important issue,” says Congressman Platts. “I would also like to thank those courageous citizens who have exposed waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal government by becoming whistleblowers.”

Congressman Platts is hopeful that passage out of Committee today will foster an agreement with the Senate and enhance protections for federal whistleblowers before the end of the 108th Congress.

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