

# NFFE News



## To the Shock of No One, VA Whistleblower Office is Still Riddled with Corruption and Retaliation

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It walks like a duck and quacks like a duck. That's obvious. But what is not obvious is at what point, exactly, will Veterans Affairs (VA) admit to its failed experiment to create a whistleblower office that is headed by political appointees with the mandate to root out the corruption of other political appointees and their subordinates?

The answer is: Probably never. Hiding corruption and enforcing retaliation is the whole point of the office itself. In that regard, it is a huge success. *(Nothing to see here, folks. You best move along...)*



**The Modern VA: Corruption Patrolling More Corruption**

The VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection was created through a flawed law passed in 2017 that was part of a larger package of laws designed to make veterans medical and health resources more available to private markets. Along with this outsourcing endeavor was the need to keep the VA complainers quiet, namely the health and medical practitioners from inside the VA that objected to authorizing care and treatments for veterans from unqualified external sources.

The 2017 whistleblower law that was sold to Congress created a tapestry of chaos and uncertainty among VA staff and practitioners. What followed were threats, intimidation, retaliation, reassignments, terminations, broken reputations, and the extinguished careers of once top experts in veterans care. Most of this illegal and perhaps criminal activity came from the very office that was created to prevent such activity, headed by unqualified political appointees and staff who are answerable to no one. Well, almost no one. Several VA inspector general investigations validated the complaints of those who endured retaliation from the whistleblower office, the Office of Special Counsel is currently investigating the office, Congress has held a few hearings on the issue, and VA leadership has promised fixes. But the show still goes on as regularly scheduled and intended. Meanwhile, VA staff and ultimately our veterans suffer.

In 1987, the old Civil Service Commission was broken up to separate the then too-cozy relationship between rule making, management, and adjudication by creating separate agencies to handle those functions. Each time the government and Congress try to blur those lines again, we fail. As expected, the VA whistleblower office experiment failed, and it is time to return the watchdogging to actual watchdogs external to the VA. Meanwhile, we are forced to relearn that a duck is not a very good watchdog. Our veterans deserve better, and their health and wellness depend on it.