

# DETROIT NATIVE SUN

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## Group of former intelligence community watchdogs call for protecting whistleblowers

PRNewswire/ -- Today, the intelligence community inspector general, Michael Atkinson, is scheduled to testify before the House Intelligence Committee about the issues raised in the whistleblower complaint over a phone call by President Donald Trump and the president of Ukraine.

The whistleblower has faced attacks by both President Trump and many Republican members of Congress that is undermining the legitimacy of whistleblowing. Eight former intelligence community inspectors general, including Joel Brenner, former inspector general at the National Security Agency, have signed an open letter calling on Congress to protect the whistleblower from retaliation and unwarranted attacks.

Recent media reports describe numerous public attacks on the process used by the Inspectors General in government agencies to accept, investigate, and report on concerns raised by employees and the imperative to protect the identity of a "whistleblower" and prevent retaliation for raising such concerns. The signatories on this statement feel compelled to express our strong support for the whistleblower process, particularly the "Letter of Urgent Concern" statutory process used by the Intelligence Community Inspector General (ICIG) with the Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act (ICWPA).

Whistleblowers are a vital component of oversight in addressing serious malfeasance both within the government and throughout the private sector. The ICWPA was enacted to remove political influence and possible retaliation from the reporting of wrongdoing. More importantly, it removes political appointees and office

holders from the decision of whether to bring the matter to light. Instead, it assigns that function to an independent Inspector General. When the whistleblower files a complaint, it triggers a mandated series of steps to ensure that the voice of the whistleblower is heard while affording protections of the classified information involved.

We especially want the public to understand the critical importance of protecting whistleblower confidentiality when he or she bravely reports a "matter of urgent concern" to the appropriate IG. Not protecting whistleblower confidentiality would seriously inhibit future disclosures and cause serious harm to the role of oversight to ensure good government; would lead to greater illegitimate leaks of classified information that could compromise our national security; encourage unchecked misconduct, especially in classified environments; contradict the intent of constitutional checks and balances; and further erode the public's trust in the institutions of government and the rule of law.

Recent media reports also convey confusion relating to another important aspect of the process involving how the whistleblower came upon the information in the complaint. We commend the ICIG for his September 30, 2019 "Office of the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community News Release," where he appropriately stated, that there is no requirement in the statute for a whistleblower to have first-hand knowledge about the urgent concern. However, in this case the whistleblower did claim to have first-hand knowledge.

## AG Nessel joins Michigan lawmakers at their elder abuse town halls

LANSING - Continuing to bring awareness to the often unrecognized and unreported instances of elder abuse in the state, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel will be the guest speaker at several Elder Abuse town halls hosted by legislators in October and November.

Attorney General Nessel said she is honored to be the guest speaker at the following town halls:

- Southfield - 4 p.m. Friday, Oct. 4, with Rep. Kyra Harris Bolden and Sen. Jeremy Moss at the Southfield Public Library, located at 26300 Evergreen Road in Southfield.
- Detroit - 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 7, with Rep. Cynthia Johnson at St. Stephen AME Church, located at 6000 John E. Hunter St. in Detroit.
- Lake Orion - 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 7, with Sen. Rosemary Bayer at 20 Front St., located at 20 Front St. in Lake Orion.
- Detroit - 3 p.m. Friday, Oct. 11, with Rep. Leslie Love at Greater Emmanuel Institution, located at 19190 Schaefer Hwy. in Detroit.
- Kalamazoo - 11:30 a.m. Monday, Oct. 21, with Sen. Sean McCann and Rep. Jon Hoadley at IBEW Local 131 located at 3641 E. Cork St. in Kalamazoo.



- Howell - 4 p.m. Monday, Oct. 21, with Rep. Hank Vaupel at Livingston County EMS, located at 1911 Tooley Rd. in Howell.
- Lansing - 3 p.m. Monday, Nov. 4, with Rep. Angela Whitwer at Delta Township District Library, located at 5130 Davenport Dr. in Lansing.
- Ypsilanti - 9:30 a.m. Monday, Nov. 18 with Rep. Ronnie Peterson at Huron Valley PAC, located at 2940 Ellsworth Rd. in Ypsilanti.

These town halls follow a 12-stop Elder Abuse Listening Tour conducted by Nessel and Michigan Supreme Court Justices Richard Bernstein and Megan Cavanagh to get feedback from seniors and advocates on nine Elder Abuse Task Force Initiatives and to understand the challenges senior residents and their advocates were facing. With more than 73,000 older adults who are victims of elder abuse each year, awareness is critical.

The Attorney General's Elder Abuse Task Force was established to crack down on these crimes and is made up of nearly 50 different organizations including law enforcement, state agencies, the Michigan House, Senate and Congressional delegation, and advocacy groups.

Nessel and local lawmakers are hoping to share more information with residents about the resources available to them now and efforts to better safeguard our most vulnerable populations - including how seniors can protect themselves from elder abuse and common consumer scams.

To learn more about the Elder Abuse Task Force, visit [www.mi.gov/elderabuse](http://www.mi.gov/elderabuse).

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