



10 Talking Points for Faith Leaders

As leaders of faith communities across our nation, we encourage you to engage your congregations in support of potential government accountability whistleblowers in your midst. They are brave, they are scared, and they hold a healthy democracy in their hands. Here are 10 talking points to help you communicate why whistleblowers need and deserve the support of our faith communities:

- 1) We need a theology of “Just Work” to uphold the public trust. We are called to do our best, be fair and honest at work; treat our fellow workers with the respect we would want to receive; offer fair wages and safe working conditions; and be sure the goods and services we provide are worth what customers or clients pay for them. Workplace values don’t stop there. We are also called to bear witness to truth when the public trust is violated.
- 2) Our democracy needs truth-tellers in the workplace. Many are worried as never before about the fragility of our democracy. Government whistleblowers bear witness to the consequences of harmful policies, legal violations, crimes and coverups. Their words lead to accountability and justice serve as deterrents to future wrongdoing.
- 3) Supporting whistleblowing aligns with our faiths. It takes tremendous moral courage to speak truth to power and refuse to let crimes and injustices go unaddressed or covered up. Supporting whistleblowers and increased whistleblower protections strengthens voices of critical importance to democracy and aligns with our faiths’ values.
- 4) Whistleblowers are soul-searchers. Most whistleblowers will feel conflicted because they are among the most loyal employees. Some feel forced into silence; others want to come forward to reveal truth but do not know how. Many will find strength through faith to move past intimidation and fear, to break their silence for the common good.
- 5) Government whistleblowers are our friends and neighbors. Whistleblowers are Democrats, Republicans and Independents. They are multifaith. Our pews hold employees across the spectrum of federal, state and municipal agencies, law enforcement, scientists and essential workers, political parties, government contractors and more who may find themselves in the unenviable position of bearing witness to, or being compelled to engage in or cover up, what they believe is wrong.
- 6) Whistleblowers and their families undergo tremendous professional and personal stress — physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Whistleblowers who choose to speak out publicly can be met with swift retaliation aimed at destroying the messenger to deflect from the alleged misconduct and deter other employees from speaking up.
- 7) Working with whistleblowers is complex: There are many issues to consider: security, safety, verification, legal rights and options, effects on family, professional risks, privacy versus publicity, and

more. Clergy and communities can only safely support and effectively counsel whistleblowers by becoming better informed and seeking expert guidance as needed.

8) Clergy are bound by strict legal and moral confidentiality and serve as important confidants. Clergy in particular need to be well-prepared to responsibly and responsively counsel friends, neighbors and congregants to navigate these complex situations. Clergy and whistleblowers also need the support of their faith communities in this calling.

9) Whistleblowers are modern-day Davids v. Goliath who deserve our support. Whistleblowers need their faith communities to understand and affirm the essential role they play in our democracy. As communities of faith, we are well-positioned to offer moral courage and kindness, replace isolation with solidarity, and offer a welcoming place of gratitude and support.

10) Bearing Witness offers free resources and expertise, tailored to clergy and faith communities, to help you effectively support whistleblowers and their families, and help them find pro bono legal support when needed.

Best Practices for Whistleblowers

Consult your loved ones.

Seek legal advice early from a Government Accountability Project lawyer or attorney specializing in whistleblower law.

Maintain an ongoing and detailed written record of all events involved in your disclosure.

Consider working within internal channels if it will be effective, but do not let yourself be perceived as a threat to your colleagues and employer.

Test the waters with work colleagues and attempt to garner their support if possible.

Identify potential allies, such as elected officials, journalists, agency staff, advocacy groups and faith leaders.

Don't communicate with external allies during work hours or while using office equipment.

Use secure communication tools, like WhatsApp or Signal, to connect with external allies.