

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET

HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

August 19, 2016

The Honorable Carolyn Colvin  
Acting Commissioner of Social Security  
U.S. Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, Maryland 21207

Dear Commissioner Colvin:

I write to call your attention to serious allegations of whistleblower retaliation at the Social Security Administration's Offices of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) in Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I will not tolerate retaliation or intimidation against whistleblowers who have come forward with information related to an ongoing investigation into ODAR operations and ask for your assurance that the Social Security Administration will take appropriate action putting an immediate stop to any such retaliation.

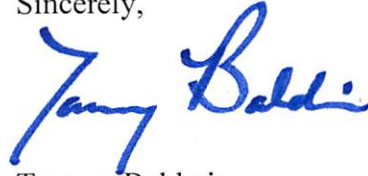
Beginning in September of 2015, I have been in contact with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) and Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to make each aware of allegations of wrongdoing from ODAR employees and possible subsequent retaliation against them. Taken together, these individuals bring to light a long list of troubling allegations including misconduct, harassment, waste, fraud and abuse. These federal employees are protected by federal law. Any attempt by management or the agency to prevent whistleblowers from communicating with my office or OIG is unacceptable.

Last month, I wrote to you about the abhorrent racist and sexist claimant descriptions a Madison ODAR administrative law judge allegedly included in hearing notes. I also shared evidence of this abhorrent language provided by a Madison ODAR employee with the OIG. That whistleblower has since been placed on administrative leave. This appears to be direct retaliation. Additionally, I am aware of an email the whistleblower received asking if information discussed during a management meeting was shared outside the office. Other employees of the Madison and Milwaukee ODAR offices have contacted me about potential retaliatory actions. I have relayed each of these individual claims to OSC and I understand their individual cases are moving forward.

I ask that you work with OSC to put an immediate stop to attempts to identify and censor individuals who provide information to my office, OIG and OSC related to an ongoing investigation into ODAR operations. Further, I ask that you put an immediate stop to any actions of retaliation or intimidation against these whistleblowers.

It is critical that federal employees are able to communicate with independent agency inspectors general and Members of Congress. I remain committed to ensuring whistleblowers are able to report wrongdoing without fear of retaliation. Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T".

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Cc: Gale Stallworth Stone, Acting Inspector General, Office of the Inspector General  
Carolyn Lerner, Special Counsel, Office of Special Counsel