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OSC URGES AGENCIES TO HEED WHISTLEBLOWER RIGHTS WHEN MONITORING EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner today issued guidance to agency heads and general counsels on government monitoring of employee email and other communications. The memorandum, distributed by the Office of Management and Budget, underscores the right of federal workers to disclose wrongdoing without fear of retaliation. It encourages agencies to ensure that their monitoring policies and practices do not interfere with or discourage employees from disclosing wrongdoing, including whistleblowing to the Office of Special Counsel or an agency Inspector General. The memo notes that while lawful agency monitoring of employee communications may serve a legitimate purpose, it must not chill employees from disclosing wrongdoing.

“Agencies should create a climate that encourages employees to report problems,” said Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. “Whistleblowers are essential to good government, because they help root out waste, fraud and abuse, and save taxpayers billions of dollars.”

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC’s primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.