

This policy was revised in legal Update 23 (issued on November 11, 2013) to update the legal references.

## BP 7700 WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

### References:

Education Code Sections 87160-87164;  
Labor Code Section 1102.5,  
Government Code Section 53296,  
Private Attorney General Act of 2004 (Labor Code Section 2698);  
29 U.S. Code Section 218C (Affordable Care Act)

The Chancellor shall establish procedures regarding the reporting and investigation of suspected unlawful activities by district employees, and the protection from retaliation of those who make such reports in good faith and/or assist in the investigation of such reports. For the purposes of this policy and any implementing procedures, “unlawful activity” refers to any activity—intentional or negligent—that violates state or federal law, local ordinances, or District policy.

The procedures shall provide that individuals are encouraged to report suspected incidents of unlawful activities without fear of retaliation, that such reports are investigated thoroughly and promptly, remedies are applied for any unlawful practices and protections are provided to those employees who, in good faith, report these activities and/or assist the District in its investigation.

Furthermore, District employees shall not:

- 1) retaliate against an employee or applicant for employment who has made a protected disclosure, assisted in an investigation, or refused to obey an illegal order; or
- 2) directly or indirectly use or attempt to use the official authority or influence of his/her position for the purpose of interfering with the right of an applicant or an employee to make a protected disclosure to the District. The District will not tolerate retaliation, and will take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct activities that violate this policy, including discipline of those who violate it up to and including termination.

**NOTE:** The **red ink** signifies language that is **suggested as good practice** by the Policy and Procedure Service and its legal counsel. This document was reviewed on September 24, 2013 by Kit, David, and Lydia. This revised document reflects the recommended revisions from legal Update 23 (issued on November 11, 2013).

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**Date Adopted:**

*(This is a new policy recommended by the  
Policy and Procedure Service)*

## Legal Citations for BP 7700

### **Education Code Sections 87160-87164; California Labor Code Section 1102.5; Government Code Section 53296; Private Attorney General Act of 2004 (Labor Code Section 2698)**

#### **EDUCATION CODE SECTIONS 87160-87164**

**87160.** This article shall be known and may be referred to as the Reporting by Community College Employees of Improper Governmental Activities Act.

87161. It is the intent of the Legislature that community college employees and other persons disclose, to the extent not expressly prohibited by law, improper governmental activities.

87162. For the purposes of this article, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Employee" means a public school employee as defined in subdivision (j) of Section 3540.1 of the Government **Code** as construed to include community college employees.

(b) "Illegal order" means any directive to violate or assist in violating a federal, state, or local law, rule, or regulation or an order to work or cause others to work in conditions outside of their line of duty that would unreasonably threaten the health or safety of employees or the public.

(c) "Improper governmental activity" means an activity by a community college or by an employee that is undertaken in the performance of the employee's official duties, whether or not that activity is within the scope of his or her employment, and that meets either of the following descriptions:

(1) The activity violates a state or federal law or regulation, including, but not limited to, corruption, malfeasance, bribery, theft of government property, fraudulent claims, fraud, coercion, conversion, malicious prosecution, misuse of government property, or willful omission to perform duty.

(2) The activity is economically wasteful or involves gross misconduct, incompetency, or inefficiency.

(d) "Person" means any individual, corporation, trust, association, any state or local government, or any agency or instrumentality of any of the foregoing.

(e) "Protected disclosure" means a good faith communication that discloses or demonstrates an intention to disclose information that may evidence either of the following:

(1) An improper governmental activity.

(2) Any condition that may significantly threaten the health or safety of employees or the public if the disclosure or intention to disclose was made for the purpose of remedying that condition.

(f) "Public school employer" has the same meaning as in subdivision (k) of Section 3540.1 of the Government **Code** as construed to include community college districts.

87163. (a) An employee may not directly or indirectly use or

attempt to use the official authority or influence of the employee for the purpose of intimidating, threatening, coercing, commanding, or attempting to intimidate, threaten, coerce, or command any person for the purpose of interfering with the right of that person to disclose to an official agent matters within the scope of this article.

(b) For the purpose of subdivision (a), "use of official authority or influence" includes promising to confer or conferring any benefit; affecting or threatening to affect any reprisal; or taking, directing others to take, recommending, processing, or approving any personnel action, including, but not limited to appointment, promotion, transfer, assignment, performance evaluation, suspension, or other disciplinary action.

(c) For the purpose of subdivision (a), "official agent" includes a community college administrator, member of the governing board of a community college district, or the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges.

(d) An employee who violates subdivision (a) may be liable in an action for civil damages brought against the employee by the offended party.

(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize an individual to disclose information otherwise prohibited by or under law.

87164. (a) An employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer who files a written complaint with his or her supervisor, a community college administrator, or the public school employer alleging actual or attempted acts of reprisal, retaliation, threats, coercion, or similar improper acts prohibited by Section 87163 for having disclosed improper governmental activities or for refusing to obey an illegal order may also file a copy of the written complaint with the local law enforcement agency, together with a sworn statement that the contents of the written complaint are true, or are believed by the affiant to be true, under penalty of perjury. The complaint filed with the local law enforcement agency shall be filed within 12 months of the most recent act of reprisal that is the subject of the complaint.

(b) A person who intentionally engages in acts of reprisal, retaliation, threats, coercion, or similar acts against an employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer for having made a protected disclosure is subject to a fine not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) and imprisonment in the county jail for a period not to exceed one year. An employee, officer, or administrator who intentionally engages in that conduct shall also be subject to discipline by the public school employer. If no adverse action is instituted by the public school employer, and it is determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that an act of reprisal, retaliation, threats, coercion, or similar acts prohibited by Section 87163, the local law enforcement agency may report the nature and details of the activity to the governing board of the community college district.

(c) (1) The State Personnel Board shall initiate a hearing or investigation of a written complaint of reprisal or retaliation as prohibited by Section 87163 within 10 working days of its submission.

The executive officer of the State Personnel Board shall complete findings of the hearing or investigation within 60 working days

thereafter, and shall provide a copy of the findings to the complaining employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer and to the appropriate supervisors, administrator, or employer. This hearing shall be conducted in accordance with Section 18671.2 of the Government **Code**, this part, and the rules of practice and procedure of the State Personnel Board. When the allegations contained in a complaint of reprisal or retaliation are the same as, or similar to, those contained in another appeal, the executive officer may consolidate the appeals into the most appropriate format.

In these cases, the time limits described in this paragraph shall not apply.

(2) Notwithstanding Section 18671.2 of the Government **Code**, no costs associated with hearings of the State Personnel Board conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be charged to the board of governors. Instead, all of the costs associated with hearings of the State Personnel Board conducted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be charged directly to the community college district that employs the complaining employee, or with whom the complaining applicant for employment has filed his or her employment application.

(d) If the findings of the executive officer of the State Personnel Board set forth acts of alleged misconduct by the supervisor, community college administrator, or public school employer, the supervisor, administrator, or employer may request a hearing before the State Personnel Board regarding the findings of the executive officer. The request for hearing and any subsequent determination by the board shall be made in accordance with the board's usual rules governing appeals, hearings, investigations, and disciplinary proceedings.

(e) If, after the hearing, the State Personnel Board determines that a violation of Section 87163 occurred, or if no hearing is requested and the findings of the executive officer conclude that improper activity has occurred, the board may order any appropriate relief, including, but not limited to, reinstatement, back pay, restoration of lost service credit if appropriate, and the expungement of any adverse records of the employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer who was the subject of the alleged acts of misconduct prohibited by Section 87163.

(f) Whenever the State Personnel Board determines that a supervisor, community college administrator, or public school employer has violated Section 87163, it shall cause an entry to that effect to be made in the supervisor's, community college administrator's, or public school employer's official personnel records.

(g) In order for the Governor and the Legislature to determine the need to continue or modify personnel procedures as they relate to the investigations of reprisals or retaliation for the disclosure of information by employees, the State Personnel Board, by June 30 of each year, shall submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature regarding complaints filed, hearings held, and legal actions taken pursuant to this section.

(h) In addition to all other penalties provided by law, a person who intentionally engages in acts of reprisal, retaliation, threats, coercion, or similar acts against an employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer for having made a protected disclosure shall be liable in an action for damages brought against him or her by the injured party. Punitive damages may be awarded by the court where the acts of the offending party are proven to be

malicious. Where liability has been established, the injured party shall also be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees as provided by law. However, an action for damages shall not be available to the injured party unless the injured party has first filed a complaint with the local law enforcement agency. Nothing in this subdivision requires an injured party to file a complaint with the State Personnel Board prior to seeking relief for damages in a court of law.

(i) This section is not intended to prevent a public school employer, school administrator, or supervisor from taking, failing to take, directing others to take, recommending, or approving a personnel action with respect to an employee or applicant for employment with a public school employer if the public school employer, school administrator, or supervisor reasonably believes an action or inaction is justified on the basis of evidence separate and apart from the fact that the person has made a protected disclosure as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 87162.

(j) In any civil action or administrative proceeding, once it has been demonstrated by a preponderance of evidence that an activity protected by this article was a contributing factor in the alleged retaliation against a former, current, or prospective employee, the burden of proof shall be on the supervisor, school administrator, or public school employer to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the alleged action would have occurred for legitimate, independent reasons even if the employee had not engaged in protected disclosures or refused an illegal order. If the supervisor, school administrator, or public school employer fails to meet this burden of proof in an adverse action against the employee in any administrative review, challenge, or adjudication in which retaliation has been demonstrated to be a contributing factor, the employee shall have a complete affirmative defense in the adverse action.

(k) Nothing in this article shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of an employee under any other federal or state law or under an employment contract or collective bargaining agreement.

(l) If the provisions of this section are in conflict with the provisions of a memorandum of understanding reached pursuant to Chapter 10.7 (commencing with Section 3540) of Division 4 of Title 1 of the Government **Code**, the memorandum of understanding shall be controlling without further legislative action.

**Labor Code 1102.5.** (a) An employer may not make, adopt, or enforce any rule, regulation, or policy preventing an employee from disclosing information to a government or law enforcement agency, where the employee has reasonable cause to believe that the info discloses a violation of state or federal statute, or a violation or noncompliance with a state or federal rule or regulation.

(b) An employer may not retaliate against an employee for disclosing information to a government or law enforcement agency, where the employee has reasonable cause to believe that the information discloses a violation of state or federal statute, or a violation or noncompliance with a state or federal rule or regulation.

(c) An employer may not retaliate against an employee for refusing to participate in an activity that would result in a violation of state or

federal statute, or a violation or noncompliance with a state or federal rule or regulation.

(d) An employer may not retaliate against an employee for having exercised his/her rights under subdivision (a), (b), or (c) in any former employment.

(e) A report made by an employee of a government agency to his or her employer is a disclosure of information to a government or law enforcement agency pursuant to subdivisions (a) and (b).

(f) In addition to other penalties, an employer that is a corporation or limited liability company is liable for a civil penalty not exceeding ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for each violation of this section.

(g) This section does not apply to rules, regulations, or policies which implement, or to actions by employers against employees who violate, the confidentiality of the lawyer-client privilege of Article 3 (commencing with Sect. 950), the physician-patient privilege of Article 6 (commencing with Sect. 990) of Chap. 4 of Div. 8 of the Evidence **Code**, or trade secret info.

**Government Code Section 53296.** Definitions used in this article:

(a) "Local agency" means any county, city, city and county, including any charter county, city, or city and county, and any district, school district, community college district, municipal or public corporation, political subdivision, or public agency of the state, or any instrumentality of any one or more of these agencies.

(b) "Disciplinary action" means any direct form of discipline as defined in personnel rules and regulations adopted by the local agency. "Disciplinary action" shall include the firing of an employee.

(c) "Disclosure of information" means the written provision of evidence regarding gross mismanagement or a significant waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

(d) "Complaint" means any written document containing a disclosure of information as specified in subdivision (c).

(e) "Employee" means any person employed by a local agency.

(f) "Manager" means any employee having significant responsibilities for formulating or administering local agency or departmental policies and programs or administering the local agency or a department.

(g) "Supervisory employee" or "supervisor" means any employee regardless of job description or title, having authority, in the interest of the employer, to hire, transfer, suspend, layoff, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees, or responsibility to direct them, or to adjust their grievances, or effectively to recommend this action, if, in connection with the foregoing, the exercise of this authority is not of a merely routine or clerical nature, but requires the use of independent judgment.

(h) "Officer" means any appointed member of a local board, commission, or other governing body who supervises or is responsible for the work of one or more local agency employers.

(i) "Administrative procedure" means any written administrative procedure adopted by the local agency for presentation of a grievance for ultimate decision by the governing body of the local agency. The term does not include grievance procedures embodied in collective bargaining agreements.

(j) "Reprisal action" means any act of intimidation, restraint, coercion, discrimination, or disciplinary action against any employee, or applicant for employment, who files a complaint pursuant to Section 53297.

**Labor Code Section 2698.** This part shall be known and may be cited as the **Labor Code** Private Attorneys General Act of 2004.

## 29 USC § 218c - Protections for employees (Affordable Care Act)

- **US Code**

Current through Pub. L. [113-36](#). (See [Public Laws for the current Congress](#).)

### **(a) Prohibition**

No employer shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against any employee with respect to his or her compensation, terms, conditions, or other privileges of employment because the employee (or an individual acting at the request of the employee) has—

- (1) received a credit under section [36B](#) of title [26](#) or a subsidy under section [18071](#) of title [42](#); [\[1\]](#)
- (2) provided, caused to be provided, or is about to provide or cause to be provided to the employer, the Federal Government, or the attorney general of a State information relating to any violation of, or any act or omission the employee reasonably believes to be a violation of, any provision of this title [\[1\]](#) (or an amendment made by this title); [\[1\]](#)
- (3) testified or is about to testify in a proceeding concerning such violation;
- (4) assisted or participated, or is about to assist or participate, in such a proceeding; or
- (5) objected to, or refused to participate in, any activity, policy, practice, or assigned task that the employee (or other such person) reasonably believed to be in violation of any provision of this title [\[1\]](#) (or amendment), or any order, rule, regulation, standard, or ban under this title [\[1\]](#) (or amendment).

### **(b) Complaint procedure**

#### **(1) In general**

An employee who believes that he or she has been discharged or otherwise discriminated against by any employer in violation of this section may seek relief in accordance with the procedures, notifications, burdens of proof, remedies, and statutes of limitation set forth in section [2087 \(b\)](#) of title [15](#).

#### **(2) No limitation on rights**

Nothing in this section shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any employee under any Federal or State law or under any collective bargaining agreement. The rights and remedies in this section may not be waived by any agreement, policy, form, or condition of employment.