

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 304

AN ACT

To improve motor vehicle safety by encouraging the sharing
of certain information.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Motor Vehicle Safety
3 Whistleblower Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY WHISTLEBLOWER INCEN-
5 TIVES AND PROTECTIONS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter IV of chapter 301 of
7 title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
8 end the following:

9 **“§ 30172. Whistleblower incentives and protections**

10 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

11 “(1) COVERED ACTION.—The term ‘covered ac-
12 tion’ means any administrative or judicial action, in-
13 cluding any related administrative or judicial action,
14 brought by the Secretary or the Attorney General
15 under this chapter that in the aggregate results in
16 monetary sanctions exceeding \$1,000,000.

17 “(2) MONETARY SANCTIONS.—The term ‘mone-
18 tary sanctions’ means monies, including penalties
19 and interest, ordered or agreed to be paid.

20 “(3) ORIGINAL INFORMATION.—The term
21 ‘original information’ means information that—

22 “(A) is derived from the independent
23 knowledge or analysis of an individual;

24 “(B) is not known to the Secretary from
25 any other source, unless the individual is the
26 original source of the information; and

1 “(C) is not exclusively derived from an al-
2 legation made in a judicial or an administrative
3 action, in a governmental report, a hearing, an
4 audit, or an investigation, or from the news
5 media, unless the individual is a source of the
6 information.

7 “(4) PART SUPPLIER.—The term ‘part supplier’
8 means a manufacturer of motor vehicle equipment.

9 “(5) SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION.—The term
10 ‘successful resolution’ includes any settlement or ad-
11 judication of a covered action.

12 “(6) WHISTLEBLOWER.—The term ‘whistle-
13 blower’ means any employee or contractor of a
14 motor vehicle manufacturer, part supplier, or dealer-
15 ship who voluntarily provides to the Secretary origi-
16 nal information relating to any motor vehicle defect,
17 noncompliance, or any violation or alleged violation
18 of any notification or reporting requirement of this
19 chapter which is likely to cause unreasonable risk of
20 death or serious physical injury.

21 “(b) AWARDS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—If the original information
23 that a whistleblower provided to the Secretary led to
24 the successful resolution of a covered action, the
25 Secretary, subject to subsection (c), may pay an

1 award or awards to 1 or more whistleblowers in an
2 aggregate amount of not more than 30 percent, in
3 total, of collected monetary sanctions.

4 “(2) PAYMENT OF AWARDS.—Any amount pay-
5 able under paragraph (1) shall be paid from the
6 monetary sanctions collected, and any monetary
7 sanctions so collected shall be available for such pay-
8 ment.

9 “(c) DETERMINATION OF AWARDS; DENIAL OF
10 AWARDS.—

11 “(1) DETERMINATION OF AWARDS.—

12 “(A) DISCRETION.—The determination of
13 whether, to whom, or in what amount to make
14 an award shall be in the discretion of the Sec-
15 retary.

16 “(B) CRITERIA.—In determining an award
17 made under subsection (b), the Secretary shall
18 take into consideration—

19 “(i) if appropriate, whether a whistle-
20 blower reported or attempted to report the
21 information internally to an applicable
22 motor vehicle manufacturer, part supplier,
23 or dealership;

24 “(ii) the significance of the original
25 information provided by the whistleblower

1 to the successful resolution of the covered
2 action;

3 “(iii) the degree of assistance provided
4 by the whistleblower and any legal rep-
5 resentative of the whistleblower in the cov-
6 ered action; and

7 “(iv) such additional factors as the
8 Secretary considers relevant.

9 “(2) DENIAL OF AWARDS.—No award under
10 subsection (b) shall be made—

11 “(A) to any whistleblower who is convicted
12 of a criminal violation related to the covered ac-
13 tion for which the whistleblower otherwise could
14 receive an award under this section;

15 “(B) to any whistleblower who, acting
16 without direction from an applicable motor ve-
17 hicle manufacturer, part supplier, or dealership,
18 or agent thereof, deliberately causes or substan-
19 tially contributes to the alleged violation of a
20 requirement of this chapter;

21 “(C) to any whistleblower who submits in-
22 formation to the Secretary that is based on the
23 facts underlying the covered action submitted
24 previously by another whistleblower;

1 “(D) to any whistleblower who fails to pro-
2 vide the original information to the Secretary in
3 such form as the Secretary may require by reg-
4 ulation; or

5 “(E) to any whistleblower who fails to re-
6 port or attempt to report the information inter-
7 nally to an applicable motor vehicle manufac-
8 turer, parts supplier, or dealership, unless—

9 “(i) the whistleblower reasonably be-
10 lieved that such an internal report would
11 have resulted in retaliation, notwith-
12 standing section 30171(a); or

13 “(ii) the whistleblower reasonably be-
14 lieved that the information—

15 “(I) was already internally re-
16 ported;

17 “(II) was already subject to or
18 part of an internal inquiry or inves-
19 tigation; or

20 “(III) was otherwise already
21 known to the motor vehicle manufac-
22 turer, part supplier, or dealership.

23 “(d) REPRESENTATION.—A whistleblower may be
24 represented by counsel.

1 “(e) NO CONTRACT NECESSARY.—No contract with
2 the Secretary is necessary for any whistleblower to receive
3 an award under subsection (b).

4 “(f) PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS; CONFIDEN-
5 TIALITY.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding section
7 30167, and except as provided in paragraphs (4)
8 and (5) of this subsection, the Secretary, and any
9 officer or employee of the Department of Transpor-
10 tation, shall not disclose any information, including
11 information provided by a whistleblower to the Sec-
12 retary, which could reasonably be expected to reveal
13 the identity of a whistleblower, except in accordance
14 with the provisions of section 552a of title 5, un-
15 less—

16 “(A) required to be disclosed to a defend-
17 ant or respondent in connection with a public
18 proceeding instituted by the Secretary or any
19 entity described in paragraph (5);

20 “(B) the whistleblower provides prior writ-
21 ten consent for the information to be disclosed;
22 or

23 “(C) the Secretary, or other officer or em-
24 ployee of the Department of Transportation, re-
25 ceives the information through another source,

1 such as during an inspection or investigation
2 under section 30166, and has authority under
3 other law to release the information.

4 “(2) REDACTION.—The Secretary, and any offi-
5 cer or employee of the Department of Transpor-
6 tation, shall take reasonable measures to not reveal
7 the identity of the whistleblower when disclosing any
8 information under paragraph (1).

9 “(3) SECTION 552(b)(3)(B).—For purposes of
10 section 552 of title 5, paragraph (1) of this sub-
11 section shall be considered a statute described in
12 subsection (b)(3)(B) of that section.

13 “(4) EFFECT.—Nothing in this subsection is
14 intended to limit the ability of the Attorney General
15 to present such evidence to a grand jury or to share
16 such evidence with potential witnesses or defendants
17 in the course of an ongoing criminal investigation.

18 “(5) AVAILABILITY TO GOVERNMENT AGEN-
19 CIES.—

20 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Without the loss of its
21 status as confidential in the hands of the Sec-
22 retary, all information referred to in paragraph
23 (1) may, in the discretion of the Secretary,
24 when determined by the Secretary to be nec-
25 essary or appropriate to accomplish the pur-

1 poses of this chapter and in accordance with
2 subparagraph (B), be made available to the fol-
3 lowing:

4 “(i) The Department of Justice.

5 “(ii) An appropriate department or
6 agency of the Federal Government, acting
7 within the scope of its jurisdiction.

8 “(B) MAINTENANCE OF INFORMATION.—
9 Each entity described in subparagraph (A) shall
10 maintain information described in that subpara-
11 graph as confidential, in accordance with the
12 requirements in paragraph (1).

13 “(g) PROVISION OF FALSE INFORMATION.—A whis-
14 tleblower who knowingly and willfully makes any false, fic-
15 titious, or fraudulent statement or representation, or who
16 makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the
17 same to contain any false, fictitious, or fraudulent state-
18 ment or entry, shall not be entitled to an award under
19 this section and shall be subject to prosecution under sec-
20 tion 1001 of title 18.

21 “(h) APPEALS.—

22 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Any determination made
23 under this section, including whether, to whom, or in
24 what amount to make an award, shall be in the dis-
25 cretion of the Secretary.

1 “(2) APPEALS.—Any determination made by
2 the Secretary under this section may be appealed by
3 a whistleblower to the appropriate court of appeals
4 of the United States not later than 30 days after the
5 determination is issued by the Secretary.

6 “(3) REVIEW.—The court shall review the de-
7 termination made by the Secretary in accordance
8 with section 706 of title 5.

9 “(i) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 18 months after
10 the date of enactment of the Motor Vehicle Safety Whistle-
11 blower Act, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations on
12 the requirements of this section, consistent with this sec-
13 tion.”.

14 (b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—

15 (1) ORIGINAL INFORMATION.—Information sub-
16 mitted to the Secretary of Transportation by a whis-
17 tleblower in accordance with the requirements of sec-
18 tion 30172 of title 49, United States Code, shall not
19 lose its status as original information solely because
20 the whistleblower submitted the information prior to
21 the effective date of the regulations if that informa-
22 tion was submitted after the date of enactment of
23 this Act.

24 (2) AWARDS.—A whistleblower may receive an
25 award under section 30172 of title 49, United States

1 Code, regardless of whether the violation underlying
2 the covered action occurred prior to the date of en-
3 actment of this Act, and may receive an award prior
4 to the Secretary of Transportation promulgating the
5 regulations under section 30172(i) of that title.

6 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—The table of con-
7 tents of subchapter IV of chapter 301 of title 49, United
8 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
9 lowing:

“30172. Whistleblower incentives and protections.”.

Passed the Senate April 28, 2015.

Attest:

Secretary.

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