



**WHAT IS A
WHISTLEBLOWER
IN WASHINGTON
STATE?**

What is a Whistleblower in Washington State?

Under the Washington State Whistleblower Act (RCW 42.40), employees are encouraged to disclose improper governmental actions, and, in turn, the Act guarantees freedom of speech in certain situations. Under this law, workers are protected from retaliation for disclosing information regarding a violation of any law, rule, regulation, abuse of authority, gross waste of funds, gross mismanagement, or a significant and specific danger to the public's safety or health. In other words, Washington law protects whistleblowers.

Who is Considered a Whistleblower?

Washington law defines "whistleblower" as an employee who:

- In good faith, alerts the auditor or other public official to alleged unlawful government action;
- Is perceived by their employer to have informed the auditor or other public official of alleged inappropriate government action, whether or not they did so;
- Is believed to have informed the auditor or the other public official of alleged unlawful government conduct or to have given that official information, but who, in reality, did not do either of those things; or
- In good faith, identifies rules warranting review or provides information to the rules review committee, or is believed to have identified rules

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that call for review or gives information to the rules review committee, but who has not done so.¹

What Protections Do Whistleblowers Have?

If you believe that your employer or company has broken the law or violated any rules or regulations, you have the right to report such unlawful conduct to the government. Whistleblower protections forbid your employer from taking adverse action against you for reporting. Whistleblowers working in the state of Washington are protected under chapter 42.40 RCW, whereas chapter 49.60 RCW prohibits companies from punishing or retaliating against those who disclose violations.

➤ Whistleblower Protections for State Employees

No official in a position of power may intimidate, threaten, force, order, or otherwise exert influence over another employee with the intent to restrict that individual's right to:

- Disclose information regarding unlawful governmental action to the auditor or public official; or
- Identify rules that warrant review or give information to the rules review committee.²

¹ RCW 42.40.020(10).

² RCW 42.40.030(1).

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➤ Unfair Practices

It is unlawful for any employer to fire, dismiss, or discriminate against an employee in retaliation for:

- Opposing the discriminatory actions that are prohibited by chapter 49.60 RCW;
- Filing a charge of discrimination under chapter 49.60 RCW; or
- Providing evidence or supporting a case under chapter 49.60 RCW.³

If you believe you have been retaliated or discriminated against as a whistleblower, speak with a skilled Washington employment law attorney immediately.

Trusted Whistleblower Attorneys in Washington

To make the most of whistleblower protections requires a thorough investigation and a well-thought-out strategy. Our dedicated whistleblower claim attorneys at Athan Law in Washington will help you build a compelling whistleblower retaliation case to get the justice you deserve. Discuss your case with us today. Contact us at (509) 215-4679.

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³ RCW 49.60.210(1).

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