

# We Have Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself; A Kinder Gentler SDO. FDR (and a little James)

Presentation Addressing The Fear of Reprisal for Bringing attention to  
Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

Presented by Greg Coss, Todd Hill, and James Latoff

# We Are Here! Greg Is Not A Cat!



# Road Map For Today

- Chapter 1: Fear of Reprisal Discussion
- Chapter 2: Advanced Decisions Vector LLC (ADV) Case Study
- Chapter 3: Surprise
- Questions & Answers

# Chapter 1: Fear of Reprisal Discussion

- Basis for this Presentation: How Did We Get Here?
- Why Do People Fear it?
- Facts and History
- Questions and Answers
- The End

# How Did We Get Here?

- Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys
- Question: whether staff can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule, or regulation without fear of reprisal?
- Results indicated a significant percentage of staff feared reprisal
- Engaged staff through multiple informal dialogues and meetings
- Focused on discovery, learning, feedback, ideas, and recommendations
- Technology was utilized to provide for anonymous feedback

# Why Do People Fear It?

The majority of concerns could be consolidated into the following categories:

- fear of making mistakes/failure;
- prior management mistrust,
- current management mistrust;
- lack of staff support/management; and
- workload management

# Why Do People Fear It Continued...

- Feeling a lot of pressure to succeed (fear of failure) and reporting something negative could hinder the mission
- Did not want to burden their colleagues or get them in trouble
- Management did not address issues after staff reported at that time
- Making a mistake can be frustrating or borderline humiliating
- Communication challenges across all levels

# S&D Office Facts and History

- One DOC employee debarred in history
- The one employee was complicit in the criminal activity
- Employee quit and became a contractor before any repercussions
- Barry had to debar the individual to protect the government
- Kinder gentler SDO
- We see T4Cause and T4Default all the time for review and no reprisal!



# Questions and Answers

- Our lines are open!
- Greg, any callers?

# The End of Chapter 1

- Todd Hill at [todd.hill@nist.gov](mailto:todd.hill@nist.gov)
  - Greg Coss at [gcoss1@doc.gov](mailto:gcoss1@doc.gov)
  - James Latoff at [jlatoff@doc.gov](mailto:jlatoff@doc.gov)
- 
- Todd has agreed to handle all tough questions, serious concerns, legitimate issues, or any negative comments
  - James will handle all positive comments
  - Greg will document and catalog any accompanying cat photos

# Chapter 2: ADV Case Study

- Quick Tip Leads to Prompt Investigation
- The Protection of The DOC
- “Green” Money Returned To The Paying Programs
- ADV Improved and Jobs Saved

Presented by James Latoff, Todd Hill, and Greg Coss

# Background

- ADV is a contractor providing IT, financial management, HR, program management, and administrative support services
- OIG received a tip from ITA that two ADV employees resumes falsely claimed B.A. degrees and previous subject matter experience the ADV employees did not have
- OIG's prompt investigation revealed ADV supplied falsified resumes for positions at ITA, BIS, and OSY

# Background Continued...

- ADV reached a settlement with DOJ and paid \$250,000
- DOJ, DOC OIG, and DOC worked together to bring money back to the impacted program offices in “green” money! – not a frequent event
- SDO worked with ADV to ensure improved policies, procedures, the bad actors left ADV, ADV hired new professional HR team, created new SOPs, third party verification, and amended Code of Business Ethics = presently responsible
- ADV still in business and employees employed (Commerce is our mission!)

# Takeaways/Lessons Learned

- A quick tip to lead to an investigation
- The investigation found multiple bureaus impacted
- DOJ was able to reach settlement in time to get the program money back to the program (with OIG and DOC help)
- So... everyone working together made the programs whole, improved the contractor, and saved the jobs of the contractor's employees

# Questions and Answers

- First, bring Todd back in
- Second, Greg, have we received any questions?

# End of Chapter 2

- Greg Coss at `gcoss1@doc.gov`
- James Latoff at `jlatoff@doc.gov`
- Todd has still agreed to handle all tough questions, serious concerns, legitimate issues, or any negative comments
- James will handle all positive comments
- Greg is still on cat photos



# Chapter 3: Demonstration of Appreciation

- This portion of our presentation will be dedicated to saying thank you to many of the key players in the resolution of the ADV matter
- We cannot thank everyone today but appreciate everyone involved
- And now your favorite SPE/SDO and mine, Ms. Olivia Bradley

# Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Christian Patton

# Supervisory Investigator – HQ Investigations Unit

## Greg Smiley

# Director of Acquisition Services, Enterprise Services

## Chris Wallis

Chief, General Law Division  
Nick Kornegay

# NIST Receivables Group Leader Julie Weiblinger

# The End.

Thank you for your time!

If you have any questions, concerns, comments, or suggestions please  
contact any of us!

ALSO.....

# Bureau Points of Contact

- NIST – Todd Hill ([todd.hill@nist.gov](mailto:todd.hill@nist.gov))
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- MAX Website:  
<https://community.max.gov/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=DOC&title=Suspension+and+Debarment+Office+of+Acquisition+Management>
- Contains **S&D handbook**, last three year's breakout sessions, S&D guidance, fraud indicators, ISDC meeting notes

\* Grants Only