



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

OCT 10 2018

To: All Department of the Interior Employees

From: Deputy Secretary

Subject: A Situational Update

A little over a year ago, I circulated a message explaining that we were going to be striving for greater accountability within the Department of the Interior (Department). From day one, Secretary Zinke and I have been committed to leaving the Department in better shape than we found it; this includes addressing employee misconduct and harassment and improving our ethics program.

During the last year, we have taken significant steps to empower employees and to create a system that holds responsible those who do engage in misconduct or unethical behavior. I want you to know we are following through with our effort; we have removed, reprimanded, or suspended employees or probationary appointees for misconduct in more than 1500 instances during 2017 and 2018.

In April 2018, the Department issued its first comprehensive policy on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassing Conduct. This policy defines and prohibits unacceptable conduct that violates the policy to set a clear standard of prohibited conduct; clarifies the rights and responsibilities of employees, supervisors, and managers; and establishes reporting procedures and accountability measures.

Furthermore, we directed each Office and Bureau to develop and implement separate Action Plans to curtail inappropriate behavior. The Action Plans provide a wide range of initiatives developed in the context of each Bureau's mission and unique needs and give a blueprint for the next steps for each organization as the Department continues to work toward a workplace free of harassment. Generally, these Action Plans stress leadership commitment and communications; implementation of new policies; training; and building upon employee trust. These plans include increasing supervisor and managerial accountability. We have made progress but still have work to do, and we are committed to holding managers accountable for inaction.

In addition to working to ensure a safe work environment, all employees have an obligation to ensure we are being proper stewards of the public's trust and taxpayer dollars entrusted to us. In my first message to you, I included the 14 principles from the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. Consistent with the emphasis on establishing a more ethical workplace culture, we directed Scott A. de la Vega, the Designated Agency Ethics Official, to identify how to strengthen the Department's ethics programs, both at the Departmental Ethics Office (DEO) level and at the Bureau and Office level. Over the past several months, we have worked diligently with the DEO and ethics officials throughout the various Bureaus and Offices to design and begin implementing robust and revised ethics

programs. One essential element of these efforts involves an unprecedented increase in the number of professional ethics officials throughout the Department. This expansion of the Department's ethics programs will enable these officials to directly assist, educate, and provide employees with the tools needed to support ethical decision making throughout the Department. I believe this effort will be a lasting change that fundamentally institutionalizes an ethical culture. I also believe it is unparalleled in its scope.

Despite these efforts, we can only take action when we are aware of misconduct or unethical behavior. For this to happen, employees have to be willing to come forward. I want you to know that your leadership is listening, and we are committed to holding individuals accountable when they have failed in their duties and obligations.

Finally, we are also taking action on another front on which we have heard from you. Many of you indicated through the last few years' Federal Employment Viewpoint Surveys that you do not see poor performers being held accountable. Earlier this week, you saw an announcement regarding a revised performance management policy for the upcoming performance year, which clearly communicates that marginal performance is not acceptable at the Department. The vast majority of our workforce exemplifies high performance, and we are ensuring that you will not be held back by the few who cannot or will not perform at an acceptable level.

We each are responsible for ensuring that we have a safe work environment that empowers each other to be productive and effective in carrying out our commitment to public service. I look forward to hearing more feedback and ideas at ideas@ios.doi.gov.