

Sixty-second  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1234**

Introduced by

Representative Glassheim

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact sections 34-11.1-04.3, 34-11.1-04.4, 34-11.1-04.5, and  
2 34-11.1-04.6 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to whistleblower protection for public  
3 employees; and to amend and reenact section 34-11.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code,  
4 relating to whistleblower protection for public employees.

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

6 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 34-11.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
7 amended and reenacted as follows:

8 **34-11.1-04. Violations for misuse reported by employee -- ReprisalsEmployer**  
9 **retaliation prohibited - Furnishing false information --Labor department.**

10 1. An employee may, without fear of reprisal, report in writing to the employee's  
11 respective agency head, a state's attorney, the attorney general, or an employee  
12 organization the existence of:

13 a. A job-related violation of local, state, or federal law, rule, regulation, or ordinance.

14 b. The job-related misuse of public resources.

15 2. For having made a report under subsection 1, no employee will:

16 a. Be dismissed from employment.

17 b. Have salary increases or employment-related benefits withheld.

18 c. Be transferred or reassigned.

19 d. Be denied a promotion that the employee otherwise would have received.

20 e. Be demoted.

21 f. Be discriminated against in any term or condition of employment.

22 3. An employer may not discharge, discipline, intimidate, penalize, discriminate against,  
23 threaten any of these prohibited actions against, or otherwise retaliate against an

employee regarding the employee's compensation or benefits, conditions, location, terms, duties, or privileges of employment because:

a. The employee, or a person acting on behalf of an employee, in good faith reports to the employer, employee organization, the attorney general, the state auditor, the labor commissioner, a state's attorney, or a law enforcement official:

(1) A violation or suspected violation of federal, state, or local law, ordinance, regulation, or rule; or

(2) A job-related misuse of public resources.

b. The employee is requested by a public body or official to participate in an investigation, a hearing, or an inquiry.

c. The employee refuses an employer's order to perform an action the employee believes violates local, state, or federal law, ordinance, rule, or regulation. The employee must have an objective basis in fact for this belief and shall inform the employer that the order is being refused for that reason.

2. An employee who intentionally furnishes false information is subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or dismissal as determined by the employee's appointing authority or designee. An employee claiming reprisal under this section may appeal first to the human resource management services division and then to the district court in the manner prescribed by chapter 28-32, or to other appropriate offices and then to district court if the employee is not under the jurisdiction of the human resource management services division.

4. The labor department shall receive complaints of violations of this section and may attempt to obtain voluntary compliance with this section through informal advice, negotiation, or conciliation. To receive assistance from the labor department, a person claiming to be aggrieved by a violation of this section shall file a complaint with the department within three hundred days after the alleged act of wrongdoing. An employee is not prohibited from filing, or required to file, a complaint with the labor department under this subsection before proceeding under other provisions of this section.

5. An employee of the state may appeal a claim of reprisal under this section in the manner prescribed for a classified employee under chapter 54-44.3. This subsection

1           does not apply to an employee under the jurisdiction of the state board of higher-  
2           education or the judicial branch of government.

3           **SECTION 2.** Section 34-11.1-04.3 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and  
4           enacted as follows:

5           **34-11.1-04.3. Claims of employer retaliation - Recourse.**

6           As provided under this chapter, an employee claiming retaliation under section 34-11.1-04  
7           may do one or more of the following:

- 8           1.   File a complaint with the labor department for assistance in obtaining voluntary  
9           compliance as provided under section 34-11.1-04.5;
- 10          2.   Appeal to the human resource management services division or other appropriate  
11          office at the state or local level as provided under subsection 1 or 2 of section  
12          34-11.1-04.4; and
- 13          3.   Bring a civil action as provided under subsection 3 of section 34-11.1-04.4.

14          **SECTION 3.** Section 34-11.1-04.4 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and  
15          enacted as follows:

16          **34-11.1-04.4. Appeal to human resource management services division or other**  
17          **appropriate office - Civil action.**

- 18          1.   A state employee who is claiming retaliation under section 34-11.1-04 may appeal the  
19          retaliation to the human resource management services division under chapter  
20          54-44.3 and then to the district court in the manner prescribed under chapter 28-32.  
21          This subsection does not apply to an employee under the jurisdiction of the state  
22          board of higher education or the judicial branch of government.
- 23          2.   An employee who is not covered under subsection 2 may appeal to the appropriate  
24          office at the state or political subdivision level and then to the district court.
- 25          3.   An employee who is not covered under subsection 1 or 2 may bring a civil action for  
26          injunctive relief or actual damages or both in the same manner as provided under  
27          subsection 3 of section 34-01-20.

28          **SECTION 4.** Section 34-11.1-04.5 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and  
29          enacted as follows:

1       **34-11.1-04.5. Claims of employer retaliation - Labor department - Voluntary**  
2 **compliance.**

- 3       1. The labor department shall receive complaints of retaliation under section  
4 34-11.1-04.1. In order to receive assistance from the labor department under this  
5 section, an employee claiming to be aggrieved shall file a complaint with the  
6 department within three hundred days after the alleged act of retaliation. An employee  
7 is not prohibited from filing nor is required to file a complaint with the labor department  
8 under this section before proceeding with any other legal remedy available.  
9       2. If an employee files a complaint of retaliation with the labor department, the  
10 department shall review the complaint to determine whether the complaint may be  
11 substantiated. If the department determines the complaint may be substantiated, the  
12 department shall attempt to obtain voluntary compliance with this section through  
13 informal advice, negotiation, or conciliation. The department's determination under this  
14 subsection is not an appealable order.

15       **SECTION 5.** Section 34-11.1-04.6 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and  
16 enacted as follows:

17       **34-11.1-04.6. Claims of employer retaliation - State auditor investigation.**

18       If an executive branch state employee, or a person acting on behalf of that employee,  
19 makes a report under subdivision a of subsection 1 of section 34-11.1-04.1 to the attorney  
20 general, the labor commissioner, a state's attorney, or a law enforcement official, and if the  
21 recipient of the report is not the employer, the recipient of the report shall forward the report to  
22 the state auditor. If the employee is employed by the state auditor, for purposes of this section  
23 the attorney general shall fulfill the investigation and reporting duties under this section.

- 24       1. Upon the state auditor's receipt of a report under this section, the state auditor shall  
25 investigate the alleged violation or suspected violation of federal, state, or local law,  
26 ordinance, regulation, or rule or the alleged job-related misuse of public resources.  
27 The state auditor may not disclose the employee's name to the public until this  
28 investigation is complete.  
29       2. Following an investigation under this section, the state auditor shall provide the state  
30 auditor's finding to the employee and to the employer. The state auditor's report must  
31 include:

- 1           a. A determination of whether a violation of federal, state, or local law, ordinance,
- 2           regulation, or rule or the alleged job-related misuse of public resources occurred;
- 3           b. Whether the employer is required to take any actions to remedy a violation or
- 4           misuse of public funds; and
- 5           c. The process through which the state auditor will track whether the employer is
- 6           implementing actions that may be required under subdivision b.
- 7        3. A state auditor report issued under this section is an appealable order under chapter
- 8        28-32.