



U.S. AbilityOne Commission Responds to Office of Special Counsel Closure of 2022 Whistleblower Complaint

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 28, 2026 – The U.S. AbilityOne Commission was notified today by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel that it has closed its review of a 2022 whistleblower complaint. The OSC press release highlights several concerns related to the Commission’s compliance and oversight processes.

The Commission acknowledges OSC’s oversight role and agrees that strengthening AbilityOne Program administration is essential; however, we respectfully disagree with OSC’s conclusion that the Commission’s determinations regarding the complaint were unreasonable or that the Commission downplayed the seriousness of the allegations raised.

Commission review of the whistleblower allegations was extensive and grounded in the evidence available across multiple years of AbilityOne Program activity. While the review identified areas for improvement – some of which the Commission had already begun addressing – the findings did not substantiate the specific allegations under relevant statutory and regulatory standards.

The Commission determined that the issues identified reflected systemic challenges and historical inconsistencies in a large, decentralized program – not intentional disregard of statutory mandates. Many of the compliance concerns cited by OSC occurred during periods of operational disruption, including the pandemic, during which temporary flexibilities were granted in good faith and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is important to emphasize that recognizing areas for improvement does not equate to finding gross mismanagement, gross waste, or statutory violations.

Moreover, the Commission completely overhauled the AbilityOne Program compliance program after the complaint. For example, all Commission compliance policies in effect today were updated or created in 2024 and 2025.

Regarding training for compliance reviews:

The Commission does not agree with OSC’s assertion that the absence of a formal compliance training program for its staff reflects a deficiency. An independent oversight panel mandated by Congress in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act – the Section 898 “Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity” – did not conclude that the Commission’s compliance staff were insufficiently trained; rather, its [final report](#) found that the compliance function was significantly understaffed. At the time of the 898 Panel’s review, the Commission had just six (6) full-time compliance employees, compared with the Panel’s recommendation of 17.66 FTEs to properly support AbilityOne Program

requirements. This staffing shortage – not the quality or availability of training – was the primary weakness identified by the 898 Panel.

Recognizing that Commission appropriations were unlikely to support building a compliance workforce at the recommended scale, the Commission undertook a structural overhaul of its compliance approach. The Commission’s designated Central Nonprofit Agencies (CNAs), with a combined compliance staff of 20 FTEs, were directed to conduct frontline compliance reviews, allowing Commission staff to focus on higher-level CNA oversight, targeted audits, and system-level integrity measures. This evidence-based, strategic realignment was adopted in 2024 and has driven more consistent compliance assessments and tracking corrective actions.

Regarding verification of nonprofit status beyond self-certification:

The Commission does not agree that reliance on nonprofit self-certification constitutes a compliance gap, especially when it is done under the penalty of perjury. The Commission has historically followed standard federal practice in accepting IRS determinations and certifications from participating nonprofit agencies. The Commission’s current verification procedures have added additional safeguards – not because the prior approach was inappropriate, but because improved tools and processes further support AbilityOne Program efficiency and integrity.

Regarding deletion of direct-submission instructions in the employee-complaint policy:

The Commission’s employee complaint policy was not deleted; it was updated, modernized, and renumbered as [Commission Policy 51.406](#) Rights of Participating Employees. This policy sets forth a mechanism for responding to and monitoring complaints that might be conveyed directly to a CNA or the Commission. This policy also affirms that nonprofit employees participating in AbilityOne Program are entitled to the same legal protections and enjoy equal access to employment benefits as other employees performing the same or similar work. Moreover, employee complaint submission processes are well-documented and distributed throughout the Commission and AbilityOne Program – most importantly through including [Office of Inspector General](#) information on websites, in publications, and at public meetings over the past decade.

The Commission acknowledges that some legacy processes, documentation practices, and timelines for responding to complaints needed to be strengthened. Many reforms were already underway prior to OSC’s review, and numerous additional improvements have since been implemented. At the same time, we maintain confidence in the rigor of our investigative review and respectfully stand by the Commission’s determinations.

The AbilityOne Program plays a vital role in expanding employment opportunities for 41,000 Americans, including 2,800 veterans, who are blind or have significant disabilities. The Commission remains committed to ensuring that the AbilityOne Program operates with transparency, accountability, and fidelity to its statutory mission. We value the oversight provided by OSC and will continue working diligently to enhance compliance structures and AbilityOne Program administration.

About the U.S. AbilityOne Commission

The U.S. AbilityOne Commission is the independent Federal agency that oversees the AbilityOne Program. The Commission is the operating name of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The Commission is composed of 15 Presidential appointees: 11 represent Federal agencies, and four serve as private citizens who are knowledgeable about employment barriers facing people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

About the AbilityOne Program

The AbilityOne Program facilitates the use of government procurement to provide employment in the United States for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. In FY 2025, approximately 41,000 individuals, including approximately 2,800 veterans and wounded warriors, were employed nationwide at approximately 400 nonprofit agencies from Maine to Guam. In addition, AbilityOne provided more than \$4.7 billion in products and services to approximately 40 Federal government agencies.

Contact scga@abilityone.gov.