



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

February 13, 2017

H.R. 657 **Follow the Rules Act**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
on February 2, 2017*

H.R. 657 would expand the protections against retaliation that are currently given to whistleblowers who refuse to violate federal laws. Under the bill those protections would extend to employees who refuse to violate federal rules and regulations.

The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) hears claims against federal agencies brought by whistleblowers. Expanding the scope of the retaliation protections to include violations of federal rules and regulations could increase the number of such hearings and related costs. However, based on information from the MSPB on the likely number of new cases under the bill, CBO expects that whistleblower cases dealing with violations of rules and regulations would be limited in number. Furthermore, based on an analysis of the cost of whistleblower cases, even if the number of cases increased by 20 percent (something CBO thinks would be unlikely) under the bill, CBO estimates that the annual cost to process them would be less than \$500,000.

Enacting the legislation could affect direct spending by agencies not funded through annual appropriations; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. However, CBO estimates that any net increase in spending by those agencies would be negligible. Enacting H.R. 657 would not affect revenues.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 657 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

H.R. 657 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Matthew Pickford. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.