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SPECIAL COUNSEL LAUNCHES NEW PROJECT TO PROTECT FEDERAL JOB RIGHTS OF SERVICE MEMBERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, DC/August 9, 2011– Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner today announced the start of a new three-year Demonstration Project expanding the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC)'s role in enforcing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). USERRA is the federal law that prohibits employment discrimination against veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve and entitles them to reinstatement in their civilian jobs upon their return from military duty.

The Project, established under the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, authorizes OSC to receive and investigate certain USERRA complaints involving federal agencies. Under current law, federal USERRA complaints are first investigated by the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS). If VETS is unable to resolve the complaint, the claimant may request referral to OSC for possible representation before the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB).

During the Project, OSC and VETS will share responsibility for investigating federal USERRA claims. All USERRA complaints against federal agencies should continue to be filed with VETS (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/>; 1-866-487-2365). VETS will automatically transfer appropriate cases to OSC for investigation. OSC expects to receive an additional 450 cases during the Project.

During a similar demonstration project from 2005 – 2007, OSC was highly successful in achieving corrective actions and favorable legal precedents on behalf of veterans, reservists, and members of the Guard.

Special Counsel Lerner commented: "We welcome the opportunity to assist more veterans and service members in their transition back to civilian life by protecting their job rights. I am committed to helping ensure that the Federal government serves as a 'model employer' under USERRA."

For more information on USERRA, see OSC's web site at <http://www.osc.gov/userra.htm>.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent investigative and prosecutorial agency whose primary mission is to safeguard the merit system in federal employment by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially retaliation for whistle blowing. OSC also operates as a secure channel for whistleblower disclosures and enforces the Hatch Act and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. For more information please visit our web site at www.osc.gov or call 1-800-872-9855.