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Special Counsel Presents Public Servant of the Year Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner presented three whistleblowers from the U.S. Port Mortuary in Dover, Delaware, with the Office of Special Counsel's Public Servant of the Year Award. The Delaware congressional delegation -- Senator Thomas Carper, Senator Christopher Coons and Representative John Carney -- joined Lerner in bestowing this award.

OSC's Public Servant of the Year Award is given annually to federal employees who bring disclosures of waste, fraud, abuse, gross mismanagement or dangers to health or public safety to OSC. For 2011, OSC recognizes three whistleblowers: James Parsons, Mary Ellen Spera and William Zwicharowski. These three mortuary professionals handle the remains of the U.S. military's fallen once they arrive at Dover Air Force Base. From 2008 to 2010, they witnessed serious wrongdoing related to the mortuary process and took the courageous step of reporting these problems to OSC.

Like so many whistleblowers, these conscientious civil servants disclosed wrongdoing despite the risk that they might face ostracism and retaliation. In response to their disclosures, the U.S. Air Force took significant corrective action. Today, the Port Mortuary is improved thanks to these individuals and to the U.S. Air Force's actions.

"Whistleblowers are courageous in their willingness to speak up for the public interest," said Lerner. "And in this particular case, the public interest was poignant, given Dover's sacred place in American life. We thank these three for their conscientious public service."

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.