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Lasting Fame for Her Role



Associated Press

Ms. Watkins worries that the SEC is woefully underfunded and ill-equipped to properly tackle warnings about future Enrons.

Sherron Watkins is amazed by her enduring fame as a whistleblower.

"I would have never expected that...I would still be traveling all over the world speaking about Enron," the 52-year-old Ms. Watkins says in a phone call from a Denver airport lounge.

"I've tried talking about other corporate

scandals, but it's Enron that audiences want to hear about: what happened and what the lessons are," Ms. Watkins said.

Ms. Watkins was an Enron vice president when internal memos revealed attempts by her to warn bosses that the company could "implode in a wave of accounting scandals."

In mid-2001, she sounded alarms inside Enron about its use of complicated off-balance-sheet vehicles to mask hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

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Executive [Jeffrey Skilling](#) in 2006.

She testified before Congress, and she was one of three whistleblowers chosen as Persons of the Year by Time magazine in 2002.

Ms. Watkins's testimony helped the U.S. government win convictions of former Enron Chairman Kenneth Lay and Chief

Since then, lawmakers have encouraged employees to blow the whistle.

Last year's Dodd-Frank financial-overhaul law guarantees bounty payments of more than \$100,000 by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Ms. Watkins says the new push "will attract more lawyers to help whistle-blowers."

But she said she worries that the SEC is "woefully underfunded and ill-equipped" to properly tackle warnings about future Enrons.

"When a lone voice tries to say that the emperor has no clothes, it's the emperor that wins out," Ms. Watkins says.

An SEC spokesman conceded that inadequate resources present challenges.

But the spokesman said that the agency has made great strides in responding to whistle-blower tips and tackling complex frauds.

—Jean Eaglesham

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