

# Oregon senator is warned not to touch women

By Andrew Selsky  
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — A long-time Oregon state senator has been warned bluntly by the Senate president not to touch any women following complaints of inappropriate contact.

“Let me very clear,” says a letter from Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney to Sen. Jeff Kruse, a Republican. “Women in the Capitol do NOT want you to touch them.”

Courtney’s letter to Kruse, written on Friday and released to the media on Tuesday, came as aftershocks from movie mogul Harvey Weinstein’s fall from grace due to numerous allegations of sexual harassment hit an unexpected place: the Oregon State Capitol.

Gov. Kate Brown noted Tuesday that a national dialogue has been stoked over sexual harassment and abuse.

“It is all too clear that no workplace or community is immune to them — sadly even in our state capitol,” the Democratic governor said in a statement. “It is long past time for these issues to be openly discussed and directly addressed.”

Courtney told Kruse in the letter that he had been previously instructed by officials in the Legislature not to touch women, and that he was removing the senator from the committees he sits on because

of two new alleged incidents. The committees are important because that’s where bills are shaped and either move ahead for a vote on the Senate floor or wither.

“Let me very clear, women in the Capitol do NOT want you to touch them.”  
— Peter Courtney

Courtney, a Democrat, also said he was having the door to Kruse’s office removed because he has continued to smoke there — despite warnings doing so is against the law and exposes the Senate to “public scorn and charges of hypocrisy.”

Kruse has denied any inappropriate contacts and says he is being denied due process, although he acknowledged the smoking.

Courtney, Oregon’s longest-serving current lawmaker with 33 years in office and 14 as Senate president, called his actions “an unprecedented step for me.”

“I have never taken this kind of action before but I am left with no other options at this time to protect our employees, members of the legislature and the public,” he wrote.

Senate Republican leader Ted Ferrioli said in a statement that “we take seriously” an ongoing investigation into

the allegations against Kruse, but added that he knows of no formal complaint filed against the senator.

Courtney said he has reported the two new alleged incidents of Kruse’s behavior toward women to the Legislature’s lawyers and human resources. He wrote that Kruse was instructed in March by those departments “not to touch women at work. Period.”

Legislative Counsel Dexter Johnson clarified to reporters Tuesday that the instruction to Kruse was in March 2016, not this year.

Kruse said in an email Monday that he has been “denied access to any of the specifics of the allegations and actually I am being denied due process in this whole thing.”

He said he’s learned more from newspapers than from the Senate about his situation. Kruse said that what he’s read suggests this is more about boundary issues than anything of a sexual nature, *The News-Review*, the newspaper in his hometown of Roseburg, reported.

“I’m assuming at this point you cannot touch a woman on her shoulder, or you cannot whisper in her ear, or anything like that,” Kruse said.

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Democratic Sen. Sara Gelsler, who is from the university town of Corvallis, had complained that a senator was making unwanted physical contact with her. On Monday, she identified him as Kruse. She said she had filed complaints with the Legislature’s human resources and attorneys. It was unclear if any complaints had been made by anyone else.

The Legislature is currently in recess and doesn’t reconvene until early next year.

**WRECK:** Rider had non-life threatening injuries

*Continued from page 1*

A 34-year-old man was operating a 2008 Kawasaki Concours and traveling behind the GMC Yukon. The rider was unable to stop for the GMC Yukon and put his motorcycle down on the roadway, striking the rear of the GMC Yukon. The rider came to rest on the south side of the roadway. He was attended to by emergency personnel and transported to St. Charles Hospital in Bend with non-life-threatening injuries. The motorcycle fire was extinguished by responding fire personnel.

No occupants of the GMC Yukon were injured. Highway 20 was closed for approximately 30 minutes in both directions to clear the roadway. The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

The Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office was assisted by Cloverdale Fire and EMS, ODOT, and Davis Towing.

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