

Women at Capitol stand up against harassment

Letter follows claims against lawmakers

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — One hundred and thirty women have signed a letter standing up against and casting light on harassment and sexism at the Oregon Capitol.

Spearheaded by state Rep. Jodi Hack, R-Salem, and House Speaker Tina Kotek and Rep. Jennifer Williamson, who are Portland Democrats, the letter is modeled after one circulated in Sacramento following accusations of widespread sexual harassment in the California statehouse.

“Oregon has more women in political leadership than any other state, and that has made a positive difference,” the letter states. “But it’s still not enough. As women working in the halls of our democratic institutions, we want to empower women to speak up without fear when they have been harassed, bullied, or dehumanized.”

The letter coincides with an Oregon landing page on the “We Said Enough” website. California lawmakers created the website last week to encourage women to tell

their stories of harassment and unwanted advances. About 150 women signed the California letter.

Circulation of the Oregon letter follows accusations by Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, and another unnamed female senator earlier this month that Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg, repeatedly inappropriately touched them. Kruse has denied the allegations.

Gelser’s revelation has sparked other women who work at the Capitol to come forward with other instances of subtle sexism and harassment, as reported by Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The letter urges lawmakers and others at the Capitol “to create a culture where it is expected that people (both men and women) will speak up when it is happening in front of them, and ensure that it is safe to report it when it happens in private.”

The Legislature will hire an outside consultant to examine its personnel policies, the House Majority office confirmed Friday.

Women who signed the letter include existing and former Democrat and Republican lawmakers, legislative staffers and lobbyists.

“Changing the culture of any institution starts at the top

and that’s ultimately what this letter is about,” Williamson, D-Portland, said. “We are committed, as a bipartisan group, to improving the culture of the Capitol and ensuring that it is a positive work environment for everyone. That starts by ensuring individuals feel empowered to come forward with issues. This isn’t about politics — it’s about making this institution better.”

Rep. Julie Parrish, who signed the letter, said she hopes the letter sparks dialogue about incidents that have stayed largely private until now.

“Oregon has a larger segment of elected women than other states — and in recent years, we have seen an uptick in female lobbyists, but politics is still a male-driven industry,” said Parrish, a Republican from West Linn.

A reminder to respect boundaries is “a good check for everybody,” she said. “Every woman’s threshold for what she thinks is appropriate or inappropriate is going to be different, but hey, if she says no, back off, listen to her. She means it.”

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, imposed “unprecedented” sanctions against Kruse in response to the allegations that Kruse continued to touch the two senators after he was asked not to

As punishment for that and for Kruse’s habit of smoking inside the Capitol building, Courtney ordered the removal of Kruse’s office door and stripped him of his committee assignments, which weakens his power to influence legislation. The door was removed early Friday.

Gelser first hinted at the allegations in a tweet in which she asked a Republican Senate aide if he would ensure members of his caucus don’t inappropriately touch or grope female lawmakers or staff in the Capitol. Gelser made an informal complaint that Kruse had touched her inappropriately in March 2016. At that time, Courtney followed protocol and reported the allegation to Legislative Counsel Dexter Johnson and Employee Services Manager Lore Christopher. Johnson and Christopher told Kruse to stop touching women at work, Courtney’s letter stated. Gelser told The Oregonian that Kruse’s behavior didn’t stop.

Courtney also has reported the latest accusations by Gelser and the other female senator to Legislative Counsel and Employee Services, and those offices are conducting a fact-finding inquiry.

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Clatsop County unemployment inches upward

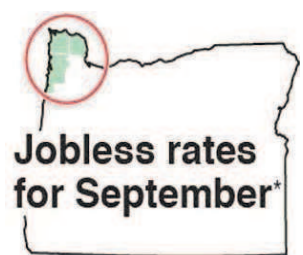
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County’s unemployment rate inched upward in September, according to seasonally adjusted figures from the state Employment Department.

Seasonally adjusted rates compare expected with actual changes in employment. The county had a 4.3 percent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in September, up from 4.1 percent in August. The county’s unemployment reached its lowest point in May, at 3.5 percent.

Clatsop County was tied for the eighth-lowest unemployment rate in the state with Deschutes and Wasco counties. Oregon and the U.S. were both at 4.2 percent.

The county lost 310 jobs in September, 50 more than expected. The private sector cut 470 jobs, while the government added 160. Leisure and hospitality cut 290; retail trade, food manufacturing and other services 40; and professional



*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates. Source: Oregon Employment Department. Daily Astorian graphic

and business services 30. Local government and education added 170 jobs as the school year began.

Nonfarm payroll employment was at 18,120, a drop of 20 compared with a year before. Leisure and hospitality added 160 jobs over the past year, and financial activities another 50. Manufacturing cut 200 jobs over the past year.

Holy Mola mola!

The Daily Astorian

Visitors to Cannon Beach met up with a huge sea creature Sunday morning.

It was tentatively identified as a Mola mola, an ocean sunfish, nearly 7 feet long, The Oregonian reported.

The Mola mola are a type of sunfish that live off the Oregon Coast. They get to be about 11 feet long and are the largest bony fish known. They also carry a multitude of eggs — up to 300 million, the largest of any vertebrate in the world.



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian
The Mola mola that washed ashore in Cannon Beach.

Portland man allegedly fired shots during chase

The Daily Astorian

A Portland man allegedly shot at a car that was chasing him after he was suspected of burglarizing an Ilwaco storage facility early Saturday morning.

John Wilson, 45, allegedly stole items from a storage

unit before 3 a.m. As he was driving away in a red Ford Explorer, the owner of the items chased him in a vehicle until Wilson was eventually arrested by Astoria Police on the south side of the Astoria Bridge near West Marine Drive.

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