

Second senator formally complains against Kruse

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A second senator has filed a public complaint against Sen. Jeff Kruse detailing accusations of unwanted touching over a period of years.

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, filed the formal complaint against the Roseburg Republican Nov. 14, according to the document released Tuesday by Oregon Legislative Counsel.

"My goal is simply to get him to stop touching me inappropriately, which he has persisted in doing despite my ongoing statements to him that I do not want him to touch me in any way other than a professional handshake," Steiner Hayward wrote.

The Beaverton senator said Kruse's inappropriate behavior escalated in 2015. Kruse began giving Steiner Hayward close hugs, touching her thigh and sitting so close to her that their legs made contact.

"I told him on several occasions that I was uncomfortable with this level of physical contact, that it was unprofessional, and that as a survivor of domestic violence those behaviors were particularly problematic for me," she wrote. "Additionally, I told him that I have asthma, and that the significant residual tobacco smoke on his clothing irritated my breathing when he sat too close to me."

Details from Steiner Hay-



Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton, walks with other senators into the inauguration ceremony of Gov. Kate Brown in the House of Representatives at the Oregon Capitol in Salem Jan. 9, 2017.

ward, first reported earlier Nov. 21 by OPB, follow news earlier this month of a public complaint filed by Sen. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis.

Steiner Hayward, through her chief of staff, referred all questions to Legislative Counsel.

In her grievance, Gelsler accused Kruse of touching her breasts and thigh, giving her

full body hugs, wrapping his arms around her tightly, kissing her cheek and whispering in her ear. She called for Kruse to be expelled from the Senate.

Previous informal complaints by the two female senators prompted a legislative lawyer and human resource administrator to warn Kruse to stop the unwanted touching. Requests to stop the behav-

ior went unheeded, according to the formal complaints by Gelsler and Steiner Hayward.

By early 2016, several women at the Capitol had complained about Kruse's unwanted touches and lodged informal complaints (which are not public) to Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem.

Kruse behaved in a more "circumspect" manner for

nearly a year, Steiner Hayward wrote.

In March, the unwanted touching resumed, she reported.

"I would remind him that I did not want him to touch me in those ways, and he would back off for a week or two, and then the cycle would begin again," she stated.

She and her chief of staff,

Lizzy Atwood Wills, devised a plan to prevent the unwanted behavior by making sure a staff member accompanied the senator during any meetings with Kruse and always left the door to the room ajar.

"I have never felt the need to take such precautions with any other man, either in my medical career or in the Legislature," Steiner Hayward wrote.

Kruse did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday afternoon. Despite mounting calls for him to resign, Kruse said Nov. 17 that he had no plans to leave his seat in the Senate.

A formal investigation into the allegations is underway. Senate President Peter Courtney has stripped Kruse of his legislative committee assignments and ordered that his senate office door be removed as discipline for smoking in the Capitol and the repeated allegations of unwanted touching.

On Monday, Kruse was looking ahead to the next legislative session in early 2018 during a presentation for the Roseburg Area Chamber of Commerce, according to KQEN News Radio 1240.

The senator acknowledged the accusations against him and referenced an Andy Warhol quote about everyone having 15 minutes of fame, the radio station reported.

"I have exceeded mine," Kruse was quoted as saying.

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