

ELIZABETH STEINER HAYWARD MD
STATE SENATOR



OREGON STATE SENATE DISTRICT 17

November 14, 2017

Lore Christopher
Director, Human Resources
Oregon Legislature

Dear Ms. Christopher,

I write today to file a formal complaint about ongoing sexual harassment by Senator Jeff Kruse. 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.

Until sometime in 2015 I had a reasonably collegial relationship with Senator Kruse. Although I occasionally felt somewhat uncomfortable with his physical interactions with me, nothing crossed the line into truly inappropriate behavior. During the latter half of 2015, however, he began to touch me more, including very close hugs, putting his hand on my thigh when we were talking, sitting close enough that his leg touched mine, etc. 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. 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.

In early 2016, his behavior escalated to the point where several women, myself included, registered informal complaints with the Senate President. I participated in an interview with Dexter Johnson and Lore Christopher, explaining my concerns both about the physical interactions and the health implications for me of his tobacco use. I was told that Mr Johnson and Ms Christopher had at least one meeting with Senator Kruse during which he was advised that he was not to touch any woman in the Capitol other than a professional handshake.

I did not see Senator Kruse much between March, 2016, and February, 2017, when legislative session began. On the rare occasions during that period when we did see each other, he was more circumspect in his behavior. However, beginning in about March 2017, his physical contact began to escalate again. 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.

In response to his behavior, my Chief of Staff, Lizzy Atwood Wills, and I developed a plan to decrease the behavior in one on one meetings. We agreed that all such meetings would take place in my office; that Lizzy or another staff member would always be present in my inner office for the entire meeting; and that the office door would remain fully open. I have never felt the need to take such precautions with any other man, either in my medical career or in the legislature.

On Thursday, October 19, Senator Kruse and I had a meeting scheduled to discuss a workgroup we were co-leading. As per our plan, Ms Atwood Wills was in my office when he arrived, and we made sure the door stayed open. When Senator Kruse arrived, I put my arm out straight to shake his hand, with the hope of limiting contact to a handshake. He shook my hand and we sat down at the octagonal table in my office. I sat at the 6:00 position, Ms Atwood Wills at 9:00, and Senator Kruse at 3:00.

During the course of our meeting, Senator Kruse continued to move his chair closer to mine, and I moved away in return. By the end of our meeting, he was at 5:00 and I was at 7:00. As he got up to leave, I again put my arm out straight to shake his hand. This time, however, he took my right hand with his right hand, placed his left hand underneath our hands, and brought my hand up and kissed it.

I immediately pushed him away with my left hand and told him to sit down. I then asked him if he had any idea why I was upset by his behavior, to which he responded no. I asked if he had heard anything about the accusations against Harvey Weinstein, the #MeToo movement, or the Dwayne Johnson test for how to treat women in professional settings (if you wouldn't do it to Dwayne Johnson, don't do it to your female colleague). I explained that his behavior was unprofessional and inappropriate, and that I considered it sexual harassment.

We spoke for about 5-10 minutes, during which time he made statements such as "men get harassed too," "I'm only being friendly; I'm just a hugger," "A lot of women cry wolf", and "It's not as if I want to have sex with you." I reiterated my objections to his behavior, and as he left he said "I really don't see why this is such a big deal." Ms. Atwood Wills was present for the entire interaction.

Later that day, in the course of a previously scheduled meeting with Senator Courtney and Senator Burdick, the issue of sexual harassment came up, and I told them about my interaction with Senator Kruse that morning. Senator Courtney immediately stated that he needed to address this behavior with Senator Kruse.

While I am appreciative of Senator Courtney's actions in response to this episode, I ultimately decided to file a formal complaint because of Senator Kruse's repeated denials of inappropriate behavior. I know that I am not the only legislator to have experienced unwanted physical contact, and believe that there are women staff members and lobbyists who have also been subjected to inappropriate behavior by Senator Kruse. Given that he persisted in this behavior despite explicit warnings from Senate leadership, legislative counsel, and Human Resources; that he continues to deny doing anything wrong; and that he refused to even acknowledge that I had the right to determine what I considered appropriate physical interactions, I do not have any choice other than to file a formal complaint.

My ultimate goal in filing this complaint is to protect myself and others from Senator Kruse's unwanted physical interactions. I am agnostic about how to achieve this goal. I will state, however, that given his continued behavior despite official warnings and clear statements from those directly affected by it, and his lack of understanding of my discomfort, I am doubtful that he can make a permanent change in this behavior.



Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward

CC: Dexter Johnson, Legislative Counsel