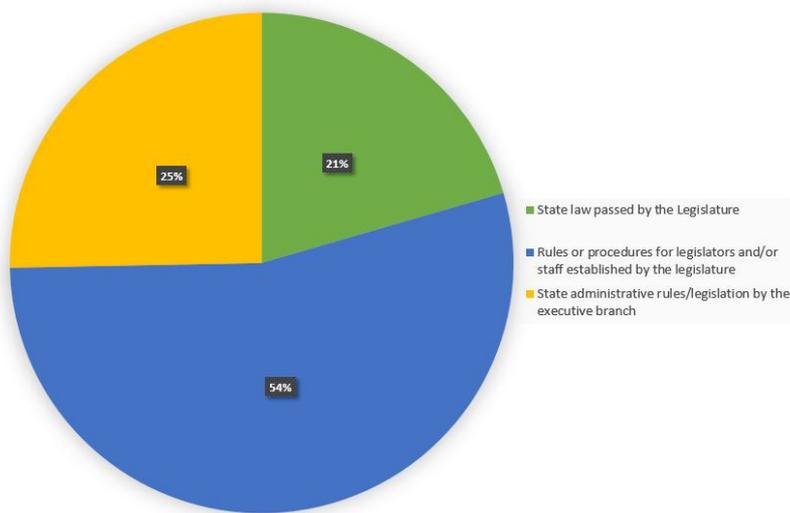


SESSION SNAP SHOT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PULSE POLL

#TRENDING: WHAT STATES ARE DOING TO ADDRESS SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Does your state currently have provisions to address sexual harassment?



METHODOLOGY

Women In Government (WIG) issued this pulse poll on sexual harassment to over 1800 women state legislators in January of 2018. We received responses and comments from legislators from 23 states on what is being done to address this issue in their state. In addition, WIG staff members traveled to several state capitals in early 2018 and held in-person discussions about sexual harassment with women state legislators and staff.

BACKGROUND

The sexual harassment of women in the workplace remains a widespread problem, affecting workers in every state, in every kind of workplace setting and industry, and at every level of employment. In October of 2017, the dam broke on the silence of sexual harassment in the workplace when the N.Y. Times reported on a decades-long list of allegations against a powerful Hollywood figure. This led to a flurry of women stepping forward to corroborate those allegations. As the limelight shone on the entertainment industry, other industries began to see attention shift in their direction, including state houses across the country.

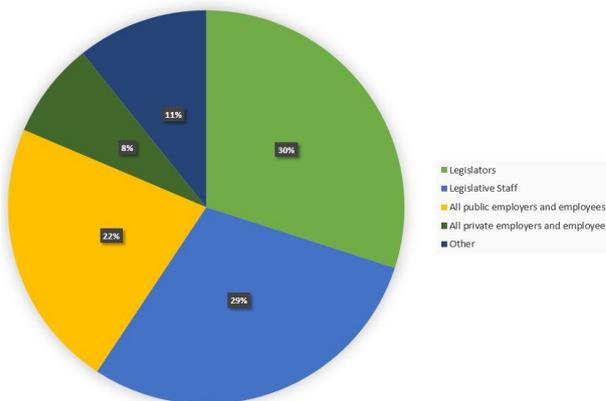
State legislatures across the country are looking to address sexual harassment with the goal of implementing systemic, sustainable reforms that will benefit the entire legislative workforce. A General Assembly's workforce needs a comprehensive, credible system to enable staff and others who have been harassed to report safely; to respond consistently and appropriately to complaints; to assess culpability; and to impose appropriate penalties based on fair and transparent principles that are consistently applied.

RESULTS: MEASURES CONSIDERED BY THE STATES:

Sexual harassment is part of the larger issue of professional Standards of Conduct. Employers have a legal as well as moral obligation to establish or maintain a productive workplace free of unprofessional conduct of all kinds. Some of the steps states are considering are:

1. Conducting a climate survey of the workplace.
2. Including all voices in the discussion, such as outside advocacy groups, to bolster credibility of the final policy with all stakeholders. This could include establishing a task force, special committee, etc.
3. Ensuring due process for alleged abusers.
4. Requiring sexual harassment training for legislators, staff and perhaps lobbyists and others.
5. Establishing clear and well known reporting mechanisms, including what the procedure is and who it applies to.
6. Establishing consequences: penalties (civil, criminal, financial), loss of committee and other leadership roles, loss of seat entirely, etc.; protection from retaliation for claimant.
7. Establishing transparency in reporting mechanisms, process for addressing reports, results of investigations, consequences/penalties for perpetrators, etc.
8. Establishing statute of limitations on complaints i.e.: should there be one and what should be in it.
9. Conducting external/3rd party investigations.

Who is covered by your state's provisions to address sexual harassment?



ARTICLES ON THE ISSUE

- Governing: Don't Rush New Sexual Harassment Policies, December 5, 2017
- New York Times: For Female Lobbyists, Harassment Often Accompanies Access, December 8, 2017
- Politico: Sexual misconduct allegations rock statehouses, November 5, 2017
- The Hill: In state capitals, women see rampant sexual harassment, October 23, 2017

STATE EXAMPLES

Each and every state legislature is unique in its operations and will need to tailor their rules and procedures accordingly. The following states have implemented broad reaching policies and procedures:

- The Alabama House of Representatives- policy
- The Colorado General Assembly- policy
- The Hawaii State Senate- policy
- The Maryland General Assembly- policy
- The Oregon Legislature- rules

*Check out our website for more information on these policies and other states working on legislation around this issue.

What measures, if any, are you or your state considering to address sexual harassment, and what is it intended to do?

