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**Gloria Allred's Response to New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's
Statements re Sexual Harassment Investigations**

We disagree with Speaker Silver's statement that the Legislature is "precluded" from referring complaints to the Assembly's Ethics committee whenever an employee also seeks some form of a private resolution of claims against an alleged harasser. Neither the law nor ethical requirements preclude such a referral.

The state legislature is not above the law which requires that all complaints of sexual harassment and sex discrimination be fully and promptly investigated and that appropriate remedial action be taken if sexual harassment or discrimination has occurred.

The state legislature and all other employers, have a duty not only to protect past victims of sexual harassment, but also to ensure that discrimination and harassment come to an end for current employees.

Entering into discussions with lawyers for an alleged victim or victims is not a substitute for an investigation, particularly since the state legislature, unlike private attorneys representing an individual or individuals, would be aware of prior complaints and/or other unlawful conduct by the same alleged harasser. Because the legislature is in a unique position to have knowledge of prior allegations of past sexual misconduct by a legislator, the legislature should understand that it has a heightened ethical and legal duty to immediately conduct a fair and impartial investigation in order to ensure that all employees of elected officials are safe, rather than victimized.

Mr. Silver has to shift his priorities. The legislators are elected officials. Their job is not to sexually harass women. If they do, there should be no corner in which they can hide. The state legislature should do everything possible to bring current and past allegations of this nature to light.

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