

Contact: Gloria Allred
323-653-6530
gallred@amglaw.com

Gloria Allred's Response to the Attack on Women in the New York Sexual Harassment Story Involving N.Y. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver

It appears that the Assembly Speaker, in an effort to divert attention from the Assembly's conduct, is attempting to blame the women who brought claims against Mr. Lopez and then agreed to a settlement. The privacy and reputation of these women has been shattered because of apparent leaks. The Speaker, through his own statements and his spokespeople, has repeatedly implied that the women who brought the claims against Mr. Lopez sought only a settlement for financial gain and that they requested that no investigation occur. That is false.

Yesterday a redacted version of a settlement agreement was improperly provided to the press by unknown sources.

As the New York Times reported, the redacted Settlement Agreement contains a provision that the parties sought to resolve their differences without resorting to court or administrative proceedings.

That clause is being interpreted as somehow absolving the Assembly of any obligation to conduct an investigation into Mr. Lopez's behavior towards the women in question.

However, that clause has nothing whatsoever to do with the Assembly's obligation to conduct a full, fair and prompt investigation once it becomes aware of allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination. Instead, it is a standard clause that appears in most settlement agreements and which simply means that since the individuals have agreed to a monetary settlement they would not file a lawsuit or a charge with a governmental entity such as the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission ("EEOC") seeking monetary relief.

As also reported in the press, the settlement agreement that was released yesterday makes it clear that the underlying facts can be disclosed if the individuals who brought the claim are served with a subpoena.

Mr. Silver has been quoted as welcoming an inquiry so as to “allow all the facts to come out.” He has stated that he sought permission for a release from the confidentiality provision, but in fact, the Assembly has sought permission only for a redacted Settlement Agreement to be revealed. We are unaware that permission to release that agreement was ever given, although the redacted agreement was leaked yesterday. We would urge a full airing of all the facts, through subpoenas being issued or otherwise, so that the facts can be fully aired.

Women who come forward with complaints of sexual harassment are entitled to protection - and should not be attacked because they agree to a settlement in order to protect their privacy and reputation. They should be afforded the chance to find work where they are valued for their merit instead of their bodies.

An investigation should be conducted a.s.a.p. and the redacted settlement agreement that was released to the press in no way absolves the Assembly of that responsibility.

Gloria Allred, Attorney at Law
Nathan Goldberg, Attorney at Law
Mariann Wang, Attorney at Law
August 30, 2012