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CA Controller Unveils Sexual Harassment Prevention Proposal to Expand Training and Transparency

SACRAMENTO— Today, California State Controller Betty T. Yee announced plans to sponsor legislation to help address the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment across economic sectors and the lack of available data on sexual harassment legal settlements paid by the state.

“Women throughout the state, from farmworkers to hotel housekeepers to restaurant line cooks, have shared with me their painful workplace experiences and feelings of powerlessness. Sexual harassment does not just happen in politics or Hollywood,” said Yee, the highest ranking female elected official in state government. “Stamping out this destructive culture starts with giving every person a voice and having all employees in the state’s public and private sectors fully understand what sexual harassment is, how to report it, and the employee’s rights under the law.”

Current law requires all employers with 50 or more employees to provide two hours of sexual harassment prevention training to supervisors. Controller Yee’s proposal would extend this requirement to employers with five or more employees, and ensure similar training in multiple languages for all rank-and-file workers who could become victims of sexual harassment.

The Controller’s proposal also would enhance the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) employee awareness outreach on harassment and discrimination in the workplace, requiring information be available in multiple languages and provided to all employees with a whistleblower hotline and link to a training video on recognizing and reporting harassment.

From 2005 to 2015, the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received about 85,000 sexual harassment complaints. Of the charges that specified jobs, 14.2 percent came from the accommodation and food service industry, 13.4 percent came from retail trade, and 11.7 percent came from manufacturing.

“The public has a right to transparency and accessibility to know how their tax dollars are spent. Sexual harassment settlements are no exception,” said Yee. “As the state’s chief fiscal officer paying government’s bills, I want to lift the veil of secrecy and level the imbalance of employee knowledge. Simply having information openly available is often the first step.”

Currently, the legislature and state government departments, when submitting bills to the State Controller for payment, do not key or code the request in a way that allows one to determine if the payment is to settle any lawsuit or harassment claim. The Controller’s legislation would require state government entities to code the request to clearly differentiate settlement claims.

Elected in 2014, Controller Yee is the tenth woman elected to a statewide office in California’s history. As the chief fiscal officer of California, Controller Yee is responsible for accountability and disbursement of the state’s financial resources. The Controller also safeguards many types of property until claimed by the rightful owners, and has independent auditing authority over government agencies that spend state funds. She is a member of numerous financing authorities, and fiscal and financial oversight entities including the Franchise Tax Board. She also serves on the boards for the nation’s two largest public pension funds. Follow the Controller on Twitter at [@CACController](https://twitter.com/CACController) and on Facebook at [California State Controller’s Office](https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaStateController).

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