

Legal Connections



POWERED BY THE COLUMBUS BAR ASSOCIATION

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TSUNAMI OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACCUSATIONS MAY LEAD TO CHANGE

The Harvey Weinstein scandal launched the #MeToo campaign and has led to a virtual deluge of women coming forward with stories of powerful men committing acts of sexual harassment, assault and undeniable abuses of power. Some conduct occurred over decades and involved a multitude of victims (80+ for Harvey Weinstein) and co-conspirators who enabled the abuse by embracing a culture of silence. Bill O'Reilly and Harvey Weinstein even negotiated protections in their employment contracts to insulate themselves if they were ever accused of sexual harassment.



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United Kingdom, Europe) and you may be stunned by the reach of the harassment scandal.

With accusers coming forward in staggering numbers, the proverbial dam of silence seems to have been broken. But what, if anything, will or should change?

1. If sexually abusive behavior is to stop, women and men alike must speak up. Targets of abusive behavior must complain, yes, but because harassers (and predators) often choose victims who are young or powerless and fearful of retaliation, it is incumbent on organizations to encourage everyone to report known or suspected harassment — silence is no longer an option.

2. Harassment training should be mandatory in both the public and private sectors. Because of the Weinstein scandal, female members of

Congress and the Ohio Statehouse have successfully campaigned to change procedural rules to require harassment training for all members. Currently, training in the private sector is mandatory in only a few states, but that may change.

3. Sexual harassment training needs a serious overhaul. Rather than focus on what is and isn't sexual harassment based on the legal definition, "civility" and "professionalism" training should be emphasized. But, if leaders at the top of the organization don't embrace a professional and respectful culture, the best training in the world won't change anything.

4. Men should fight any inclination to exclude women. I fully expect some men will react in exactly the wrong way by quietly excluding women from business meetings, out-of-town travel or client networking events for fear of "being falsely accused" of inappropriate behavior.

The staggering list of sexual misconduct grows by the day. Try searching "Men Accused of Sexual Harassment _____" and fill in the blank with an industry (Hollywood, Silicon Valley, Government) or geographic location (Ohio,

For many families, the holidays bring on stressful discussions about money, time spent with family and opposing views. Minimize stress with proper planning and a healthy lifestyle."

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Certainly, false accusations do happen, but well-meaning men who treat female colleagues with respect should have little concern. Depriving women of professional growth and advancement opportunities turns back the clock and will only hurt the organization in the long run.

Time will tell what the lasting impact of these sexual harassment scandals will be, but change is already happening. ■

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MAKING THE HOLIDAYS GREAT AGAIN: WHY COMPROMISE MEANS EVERYTHING

The days are now numbered, when the cranberry sauce, the Menorah and those stocking stuffers become a reality. Old traditions continue, and new traditions spark new memories. This season also brings stress over several divisive issues.



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however, never saw the need for a tree. It created the culture in our house that the holidays celebrate boxed gifts. Our father taught us a very important lesson: consider all the positions and reach a friendly compromise.

Debates over political beliefs and proper child rearing will arise; take time to listen, but know changing minds over lifelong beliefs will never happen over turkey and bourbon.

The work holiday party is not the place for you to discuss the disappointment in your bonus. Instead consider a sit-down with your employer; this guarantees sobriety and clear thoughts from both sides. Raising children? The holidays stopped being about

you the moment you had a child. Find a peaceful schedule you have developed between each other and stick to it.

While I am a practicing attorney, compromise has nothing to do with having a JD; it has everything to do with what the holiday season is all about. It is possible to enjoy this time of year, but it's up to all of us to manage our emotions and make decisions, considering all points.

If you still deal with the stubborn co-worker or family member, find the positive light from their behavior. They may have a point or, to my father's credit, a valuable lesson.

I wish to all a meaningful and happy holiday season, and to my father...we are keeping the tree in the basement this year. ■

EDUCATION & EVENTS

Friday, Dec 1 • 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
2017 Trial Skills Institute
6.0 CLE Hours

Saturday, Dec 2 • 9 – 10 a.m.
Notary Public: Test Only

Monday, Dec 4 • 1:30 – 4:45 p.m.
The High Performance Law Firm
3.0 CLE Hours

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