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## Colorado 50/50 Calls for Overhaul of Legislature's Workplace Harassment Policy

Fort Collins, Colo. (December 8) – A group encouraging women to run for office in Colorado says the rampant sexual harassment problems at the Capitol must end.

“What we are seeing is a pattern of abuse of power,” said Colorado 50/50 Founder Erin Hottenstein. “When you have four men, of both political parties, of both chambers, being accused of harassment by numerous women and men that tells you there is a culture of sexual misconduct at the Capitol.”

The group is concerned that the stories are only the tip of the iceberg and notes that many victims, including female lawmakers, have not made formal complaints.

Suspecting a systemic problem and wondering where the breakdowns are, the group researched the Legislature's Joint Rule 38 and the accompanying Workplace Harassment Policy. The group also interviewed several victims to better understand their experience of filing formal complaints.

“The policy and the process are deeply flawed,” Hottenstein said. “We are seeing problems at every step of the way from the initial reporting to the investigating to the decision-making.”

“The deck is stacked against the victims, putting them in a stressful situation that is difficult to navigate and extremely exposing,” she said.

Also disturbing is the dearth of information available to the public and the implications for holding bad actors accountable.

“It is crucial that the Legislature keep records on workplace harassment and make parts of them public, while still protecting victims and their need for confidentiality,” Hottenstein said.

“The voters are ultimately responsible for taking action against poorly performing legislators. They cannot hold their elected officials accountable without this kind of information,” she continued. “Voters may even be unknowingly perpetuating sexual misconduct due to the secrecy currently in place.”

Colorado 50/50 is urging the Legislature to overhaul the Workplace Harassment Policy.

“You shouldn’t need a bodyguard to work at the Capitol,” Hottenstein said. “The Legislature should be safe.”

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