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Fact Check: Filner's Accusers



Photo courtesy of "The Daily Show"

Statement: "Over a dozen female employees have accused Filner of unwanted sexual advances but now it seems his misdeeds may not have stopped there," interim host John Oliver said during the Aug. 15 episode of "The Daily Show."

Determination: False

Analysis: Numerous women have accused Mayor Bob Filner of groping or unwanted flirtations in recent months.

The allegations have inspired comics to weigh in, including interim "Daily Show" host John Oliver. Last Thursday, he told viewers that more than a dozen female staffers have accused Filner of unwanted sexual advances.

That's not quite true.

Here's a list of the women who have publicly accused Filner. Most aren't city workers who could pursue sexual harassment lawsuits.

Accuser No. 1: Irene McCormack, Filner's former communications director, filed a sexual harassment suit against the mayor and the city. She accused Filner of repeatedly grabbing her and making sexual comments.

Accuser No. 2: Political consultant Laura Fink said Filner patted her rear end at a 2005 fundraiser. She was working as his deputy campaign manager at the time.

Accuser No. 3: School psychologist and nonprofit leader Morgan Rose claimed Filner tried to kiss her four times during a 2009 meeting at a restaurant.

Accuser No. 4: Sharon Bernie-Cloward, president of the San Diego Port Tenants Association, said Filner told her he wanted to date her at a 2010 event and later "groped her backside" at a 2012 gathering.

Accuser No. 5: Businesswoman Patti Roscoe said Filner repeatedly tried to kiss her, and "as recently a few months ago" he slobbered on her chin when she tried to turn away.

Accuser No. 6: Ronne Froman, a retired Navy rear admiral who once served as the city's chief operating officer, claimed Filner ran his finger up her cheek and asked whether she was in a romantic relationship at a meeting at his congressional office.

Accuser No. 7: Joyce Gattas, dean of the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts at San Diego State University, said she was subjected to sexual innuendos and repeated interactions with the mayor "where he's held me too tight, a kiss on the cheek which is inappropriate, hands on the knee that last too long."

Accuser No. 8: Lisa Curtin, director of government and military education at San Diego City College, said Filner asked if she would go out with him and tried to kiss her at a 2011 meeting.

Accuser No. 9: Marilyn Monroe impersonator Emily Gilbert said the mayor pulled her "a little too tight" and briefly touched her rear end at a December fundraising event.

Accuser No. 10: Bank employee Renee Estill-Sombright said Filner grabbed her hands and asked her on a date at a June benefit at a La Jolla church.

Accuser No. 11: Nurse Michelle Tyler said Filner implicitly suggested he'd help a veteran Tyler was assisting if she went on a date with him. Tyler and Marine veteran Katherine Ragazzino said they met Filner at his office in June.

Accuser No. 12: Retired Air Force Master Sgt. Eldonna Fernandez, who met Filner at a benefit for the National Women's Veterans Association of America last year, said the then-congressman asked her on a date and later called her requesting the same, saying he'd fallen in love with her during a speech at the event.

Accuser No. 13: Army veteran Gerri Tindley, who gave a speech about a rape that she experienced years ago at the same event Fernandez attended, said Filner sat "as close as he could" as he asked about the incident after the speech.

Accuser No. 14: A longtime city employee who only identified herself as "Stacy" told KOGO the mayor asked her on a date after meeting her at a spring event. Uncomfortable, the woman said she walked toward two uniformed city staffers and Filner followed her, eventually pulling him toward her.

Accuser No. 15: Attorney Kathryn Vaughn claimed Filner “made an inappropriate movement on (her) body” at a public gathering about 10 years ago.

Accuser No. 16: Peggy Shannon, a great-grandmother who works part time at City Hall, said Filner kissed her on the mouth, repeatedly asked her to go on dates and once told her he could perform sex acts for eight hours straight.

Accuser No. 17: Real estate agent Caryl Iseman said Filner touched her breast at a fundraiser more than 25 years ago.

Of these 17 women, only three worked for or with the mayor since his December inauguration. Fink worked for Filner years ago when he served as a congressman. Oliver claimed that “over a dozen” female employees had accused Filner of inappropriate behavior, so his claim is false.

That said, some of the women who did not work for Filner still might have valid legal cases against him.

Sexual harassment laws only address staffers who claim they experienced severe, frequent sexual advances, so women who haven’t worked for the mayor can’t sue over such allegations, said [attorney Josh Gruenberg](#), who has represented many sexual harassment victims.

But women who haven’t worked for Filner could pursue civil cases if the bad behavior they allege happened within the past year. Gruenberg said they’d likely claim that the mayor’s behavior led them to experience emotional distress.

Still, the fleeting nature of most of the accusations means the women are unlikely to collect much cash even if they prevail in court, Gruenberg said.

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