

San Diego settles sexual harassment suit against ex-mayor for \$667,000



The \$667,000 that San Diego agreed to pay to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit against former San Diego Mayor Bob Filner was the largest the city has paid in litigation involving Filner. (Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times)

By **David Garrick**

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San Diego on Tuesday agreed to pay \$667,000 to settle a sexual harassment lawsuit against former Mayor Bob Filner.

The suit filed by Benelia Santos-Hunter, who had worked as the mayor's executive assistant, described more than two dozen incidents in which Filner allegedly grabbed her buttocks, asked to hug and kiss her and tried to touch her breasts.

Accusations of inappropriate behavior from more than a dozen women prompted Filner to resign in 2013 after less than a year in office.

Tuesday's settlement was the largest the city has paid in litigation involving the former mayor. City Atty. Jan Goldsmith said total payouts would be about \$1 million after two remaining cases are resolved.

Goldsmith said his office chose to settle Santos-Hunter's lawsuit, which had been scheduled to go to trial this week, because he worried the city might have had to pay significantly more money.

Her case was strong, Goldsmith said, and Filner had harassed Santos-Hunter over a period of several months. Some of the other women, including the two with unresolved cases, had alleged single instances of inappropriate behavior.

"There was compelling evidence she was a victim of sexual harassment," Goldsmith said. "This was a very dark and sad period of San Diego's history. It was something the city of San Diego is not proud of."

The news came shortly after Filner denied in an interview last month with the Voice of San Diego that he had ever sexually harassed women — calling some of the accusations "fantasies."

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