

San Diego paying sexual harassment victim \$225K



By **David Garrick** · Contact Reporter

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San Diego has agreed to pay \$225,000 to a deputy city attorney for emotional harm she suffered during three years of alleged sexual harassment by a supervisor, including being touched against her will multiple times.

The alleged harassment also included the supervisor telling her to keep quiet about getting harassed previously by former Mayor Bob Filner, and defending Filner in 2013 when other instances of his alleged sexual abuse were reported by the media.

Molly Hoot, who has worked for the city since 2008, remained on the job after filing her lawsuit last fall and will continue to work as a deputy city attorney, her lawyer said on Monday.

"There was no loss-of-earnings claim," said her attorney, [Josh Gruenberg](#). "This was money to compensate her for the emotional harm that she suffered on the job."

Gruenberg said the city has helped Hoot find a job where the office environment is safe and acceptable.

"Molly is proud of working for the city and it was important to her to keep her job, but she had to file a lawsuit to put an end to the behavior," Gruenberg said.

Daniel Bamberg, the assistant city attorney who allegedly harassed Hoot, was immediately placed on administrative leave when the suit was filed and retired shortly afterward.

Hoot's suit claims Bamberg, who is 21 years older than her, repeatedly sent her inappropriate text messages, verbally requested sex and touched Hoot against her will multiple times.

The suit also says officials in the city's Equal Employment Opportunity office missed several chances to resolve the situation despite Hoot reaching out.

"These two cases show they are not taking terribly seriously their duty to investigate claims," Gruenberg said. "If the EEO office had investigated this claim, not only would the actions have been curtailed much earlier, but Mr. Bamberg's career could also have been salvaged."

Gruenberg said the city inappropriately put the burden of deciding how to proceed on Hoot, instead of investigating and talking to witnesses.

"She was made to feel 'are you sure this is something you really want to do,'" Gruenberg said. "You can't discourage someone like that."

Gerry Braun, a spokesman for City Attorney Mara Elliott, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Bamberg worked as a city prosecutor from 1974 to 1977 and returned to the city attorney's office in 2005.

The City Council approved the settlement last week in closed session.

Original Article: <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/politics/sd-me-government-0411-story.html>