

# The Federal Funding Accountability for Sexual Harassers Act

## Congresswoman Jackie Speier (CA-14)



**Supported by: American Association of University Women (AAUW); American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO (AFT); National Organization for Women (NOW); and Association for Women in Mathematics**

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### **Background:**

- In order for women and minorities to reach their full potential as scientists and engineers, they need to be able to do their work free from sexism and discrimination.
- Unfortunately, sexual abuse and harassment in the sciences is rampant. In a peer-reviewed study published in 2014, 25% of women surveyed (and 6% of men) were sexually assaulted while conducting scientific fieldwork, and 71% of women and 41% of men also reported that they were sexually harassed.
- There have been many high-profile cases of science professors sexually harassing and assaulting their students and staff while continuing to receive taxpayer-funded grants. Examples include Geoff Marcy (UC Berkeley), Tim Slater (University of Arizona), Jason Lieb (University of Chicago), Christian Ott (CalTech), and Michael Katze (University of Washington).
- Abusive professors continue to get new jobs (dubbed “pass-the-harasser”) and taxpayer-funded grants. The Federal Funding Accountability for Sexual Harassers Act targets this problem by informing federal grantmaking agencies about substantiated findings of sexual abuse and harassment, and giving the agencies the explicit authority to consider this information when making future funding decisions.

### **Bill Summary:**

- If a university grievance procedure finds that a research professor has engaged in discrimination on the basis of sex, the university must report the finding to all federal agencies that have awarded it competitive research and development grants in the past 10 years (e.g., NIH, NSF, NASA).
- The university must also report incomplete investigations that have been ongoing for more than 6 months to the agencies, but without any personally identifiable information.
- Each funding agency may then consider these reports when awarding future competitive research grants. They must keep the reports on file for 10 years, unless there is another violation by the same principal investigator, in which case the clock will restart.
- In their annual budget requests, agencies will be required to disclose how many complete and incomplete reports they received, and in how many cases they elected to award funding to a principal investigator with a known history of sexual assault or harassment.

**For questions, or to cosponsor, please contact [Miriam.Goldstein@mail.house.gov](mailto:Miriam.Goldstein@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Speier.**

# **The Federal Funding Accountability for Sexual Harassers Act**

## **Section-by-Section**

### **Section 1: Title**

Federal Funding Accountability for Sexual Harassers Act

### **Section 2: Requirements for Institutions of Higher Education.**

- Amends section 487(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as follows: if a university grievance procedure finds that a research professor (referred to here as “principal investigator”) has engaged in discrimination on the basis of sex, the university must report the finding to all federal agencies that have awarded it competitive research and development grants in the past 10 years (e.g., NIH, NSF, NASA).
  - Lists specific information (name, date, nature of violation, findings, and remedy) that must be reported.
- States that if a grievance procedure is underway, but has been incomplete for more than 6 months, the university must also report this to the agencies, but without any personally identifiable information on the principal investigator(s) involved.
  - List specific information (status of complaint, nature of complaint, date of alleged violation, and reason why the grievance procedure is incomplete) that must be reported.
- Clarifies that it is the university’s responsibility to ensure that the information is accurate, and to report any corrections to the appropriate agencies.
- Defines principal investigator.

### **Section 3: Requirements for certain federal departments and agencies.**

- Applies the Act to each federal department or agency authorized to award competitive research and development grants.
- When making the final funding decision, each covered department or agency must:
  - Determine if any reports have been filed on any principal investigators listed on a grant recommended for funding.
  - If a report has been filed, the agency must consider the report when making the final decision on whether to fund the grant.
- Agencies must keep all reports on file for 10 years, unless there are additional reports on a particular principal investigator, in which case the clock will restart.

### **Section 4: Reporting requirements for certain federal departments and agencies**

- Requires federal departments and agencies covered under this bill to report the following in their annual budget requests to Congress:
  - Number of complete and incomplete reports received
  - Number of cases in which the agency recommended awarding a grant to a principal investigator with a case of sexual assault or harassment on file.

### **Section 5: National Academies Report**

- Requires the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a comprehensive study on the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment in higher education, with an emphasis on specific recommendations for evidence-based solutions.

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