

Ernst & Young Partner Files Federal Sexual-Harassment Complaint

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A tax partner at Ernst & Young LLP has filed a federal sexual-harassment complaint against the accounting firm, alleging another partner groped and assaulted her in 2015 and that the firm hasn't taken the matter seriously.

Jessica Casucci, a 14-year employee and a partner since 2014, says her career has been damaged as a result of the harassment by the other partner, John Martinkat, according to the complaint filed Wednesday with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Mr. Martinkat has been placed on administrative leave, according to the firm, as new information was brought to the firm's attention last week.

In a statement, Ernst & Young, which brands itself as EY, said it is investigating the matter and "strong disciplinary actions" will be taken against anyone the firm determines has violated its policies or code of conduct. "We take all allegations of sexual harassment seriously," the firm said.

Mr. Martinkat, who wasn't a party to the complaint, couldn't be reached for comment.

Ms. Casucci's complaint says EY has a "lack of concern for sexual assault and harassment in the workplace." Her attorney, Michael Willemin, said Wednesday that Ms. Casucci had had reported Mr. Martinkat's conduct to an EY official in 2016. "'Strong disciplinary actions' should have been taken long ago," Mr. Willemin said.

In the alleged June 2015 incident at an EY conference in Orlando, Fla., Ms. Casucci says Mr. Martinkat lifted her up over his shoulder and aggressively groped her breasts and rear end, in front of two other EY partners who did nothing to stop it. He told her, "I know that you want to f-- me," according to the complaint.

Ms. Casucci was "terrified, upset and deeply offended" and tried unsuccessfully to break away from Mr. Martinkat before he finally let her go, according to the complaint.

Later that evening, even though she had rejected his advances, she still received "lewd and sexual emails and text messages" from him, according to the complaint. In one of them, he called her "[o]ne of if not the hottest partner," the complaint says.

Ms. Casucci later reported Mr. Martinkat's conduct to an EY official but he "was subject to little or no discipline and suffered zero repercussions for his conduct," while she had to move to a different EY team and specialty and decline work on certain projects to avoid having to work with him, the complaint alleges.

“Ms. Casucci’s career trajectory and earning potential have been adversely impacted, while EY has made sure that Mr. Martinkat’s career has not been affected at all,” according to the complaint.

Ms. Casucci claimed to have suffered stress-related insomnia over the incident, according to the complaint. It added that when Ms. Casucci returned to the same conference the following year, she passed out due to stress and anxiety from fear of running into Mr. Martinkat, and had to be rushed to an emergency room.

After a complaint is filed with the EEOC, according to its website, the commission may ask both sides to take part in mediation to resolve the matter, or it may investigate. If the EEOC determines the law may have been violated, it may try to reach a settlement with the employer; if a settlement doesn’t happen, it can file suit. If the EEOC isn’t able to determine the law was broken, the employee then has the right to sue his or her employer directly.