

Another Former Partner at Ernst & Young Claims 'Egregious' Sexual Harassment, Retaliation

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Women at Ernst & Young face “egregious” sexual harassment, including pay discrimination and routine comments about their breasts and other body parts, according to a former partner at the company who filed an official federal complaint on Monday.

Karen Ward claims in her 21-page Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint that her supervisor told her that she was “really hot,” and that he loved her “great big round boobs” and “nice ass.”

That same supervisor allegedly texted her at 2 a.m. on work trips, requesting Ward to meet him for drinks in the hotel bar. He also regularly commented on her female colleagues’ big breasts, she said.

“EY is led almost entirely by men who foster and promote a ‘boys’ club’ culture where women are unpaid and subjected to constant discrimination and sexual harassment,” said Ward’s attorney, Michael Willemin. “To protect the men that engage in this conduct, EY openly retaliates against women who are courageous enough to stand up for their rights and complain. It is particularly offensive in this day and age for a company to attempt to bully and intimidate women into staying silent. Ms. Ward will not stay silent.”

Ward claims that it was “regular practice” for men at the company “to brag that they were able to situate their chairs in such a way that they were able to see a junior female employee’s vagina, or, as they disgustingly referred to it, her ‘snatch.’”

According to the report, Ward made several complaints in writing about the alleged discriminatory treatment before she was transferred to another team. She was allegedly told that “there is an issue here because you are a woman” and that “women do not succeed here.”

Another partner warned her to “be careful” about making complaints so that she wouldn’t be “perceived as bitchy,” the document states.

Eventually, Ward was fired.

Ernst & Young issued a press release Monday morning in response to Ward’s allegations, calling them “unfounded and baseless.”

“She was separated from EY following the Firm’s decision to shut down the small real estate investment banking advisory practice that she led for three years,” the release says. “Despite the Firm’s full support, Ward failed to close a single transaction in the period she led the group, and it suffered multiple years of disappointing financial results.”

According to the company, Ward’s “allegations of harassment, retaliation and unfair pay” were only raised after she was told of the separation.

“After an extensive independent investigation by the Latham & Watkins law firm, these allegations were found to be completely unsubstantiated,” the press release claims. “Our review also confirmed that throughout her career at EY, Ward was paid fairly and equitably for her work. EY will vigorously defend our firm and our people in contesting these claims.”

Willemin, in a statement to The Daily Beast on Monday, called the release from Ernst & Young “just another example of a big company trying to bully a woman who reports misconduct.”

“EY should be ashamed of itself,” he added. “Ms. Ward was responsible for bringing approximately \$50mm in revenue during her tenure at EY, and the statement that she failed to close transactions is flat out false. Just one month before her termination, Ms. Ward facilitated a deal that generated \$5mm in fees to EY, and a VP at EY referred to Ms. Ward’s work on the deal as ‘instrumental.’”

Despite the firm’s denials, another former partner at Ernst & Young, Jessica Casucci, [filed a similar complaint](#) in April, which claimed sexual assault and harassment by a male partner. She claimed her colleagues groped her breasts and rear end in front of others, humiliating her in front of her coworkers.

One partner allegedly groped her while telling her, “I’ve wanted to fuck you for so long,” “I know that you want to fuck me,” and that the “sex would be amazing,” The Daily Beast [reported at the time](#).

The men featured in Casucci’s report were, according to her complaint, “subject to little or no discipline and suffered zero repercussions,” despite the fact that Casucci was “forced to abandon client relationships, decline work on certain projects and rebuild her entire book of business from scratch.”

In the statements sent in April and on Monday, Ernst & Young noted that it is “committed to a workplace free of discrimination and harassment of any kind.”