



## CAOC-backed bills inspired by #MeToo movement clear first legislative hurdle in Sacramento

AB 9 and AB 51 will protect victims of workplace sexual harassment

**SACRAMENTO (March 6, 2019)** – Two bills aimed at protecting victims of workplace sexual harassment were approved by the California Assembly Labor and Employment Committee today. Both bills were written in response to the #MeToo movement and are sponsored by Consumer Attorneys of California.

Assembly Bill 9, the SHARE (Stopping Harassment and Reporting Extension) Act, by Asm. Eloise Gómez Reyes (D-San Bernardino), Asm. Laura Friedman (D-Glendale) and Asm. Marie Waldron (R-Escondido), would extend the time to file claims of harassment and discrimination under California’s Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) from the current one year to three years, giving victims a better chance of holding sexual predators accountable. Several other states already allow three years or longer to file such claims.

Often, victims who are struggling to overcome trauma or facing pressure in the workplace are unable to move forward with a claim until after the current one-year deadline has passed. In addition, many who work in low-wage jobs are not aware of their legal rights and may not know that the way they have been treated is against the law, until it is too late. They may not realize that, under the current law, if they don’t file a claim within a year, they cannot do so at all.

“The goal in extending the deadline is to increase the chance of bringing sexual predators to justice and thus reduce the number of repeat offenders,” said CAOC president Mike Arias. “Extending the deadline will also give more time to resolve a claim outside of court.”

AB 9 is co-sponsored by the California Employment Lawyers Assn. and Equal Rights Advocates. It will next be heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Assembly Bill 51 by Asm. Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego) would ensure that a worker is not, as a condition of employment, forced to resolve claims of workplace sexual misconduct through arbitration rather than the public forum of a court or state agency. As a result, sexual predators could no longer use the secret setting of arbitration to hide their misconduct.

“Forcing workers to waive their right to take claims to court lets companies keep harassment, discrimination and other labor violations out of the public eye,” Arias said. “In some cases, that has allowed serial harassers and repeat violators to continue their conduct for years.”

Under AB 51, workers would still be able to freely and voluntarily enter into an arbitration agreement, but it would prevent an employer from retaliating against an employee who refused to agree to such a clause.

AB 51 is co-sponsored by the California Labor Federation AFL-CIO. It will next be heard in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

*Consumer Attorneys of California is a professional organization of plaintiffs' attorneys representing consumers seeking accountability against wrongdoers in cases involving personal injury, product liability, environmental degradation and other causes.*

**For more information:**

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