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JOHN RIZZO

MISSOURI STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 19
MINORITY WHIP

Aug. 19, 2015

The Honorable Todd Richardson
Speaker of the House
State Capitol, Room 308 A
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Speaker Richardson:

While I commend your leadership in establishing a task force to develop a new intern policy for the House of Representatives and appreciate the efforts put forth by the task force members, I believe additional actions are warranted to ensure this matter is handled with full transparency and yields the best possible result. Therefore, I respectfully request that you elevate the task force to the status of an interim committee and expand its duties to include developing policies for combatting the broader problem of sexual harassment in the Missouri Capitol.

The task force's work to date has been helpful, but it has been largely conducted in private. With an interim House committee, we can provide a public forum for former interns to relate their stories – positive and negative – and offer suggestions for how the experience for legislative interns could be improved. I believe implementing a new policy without hearing from those most affected by it would do a disservice to the House and the people of Missouri and undermine what we are trying to achieve.

And while the focus thus far has been appropriately placed on how to better protect young college interns, we must do substantially more to ensure that everyone who works or regularly spends time in the Capitol enjoys an environment that is free of sexual harassment.

Discussing these issues in a public setting and allowing victims of sexual harassment to share their stories and have their voices heard might prove uncomfortable, but it is absolutely necessary if the Missouri House of Representatives is establish a high standard for behavior under which everyone is treated with respect and protected from inappropriate and unwanted advances.

Thank you for considering this request, and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JR" or "John Rizzo", written in a cursive style.

State Rep. John Rizzo
19th District

