

## “The #MeToo Movement Hits Home”

by Amairi Cordova

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NEW ORLEANS, La - The 19th Amendment is arguably one of the most important pieces of legislation passed in favor of women. Now, nearly a century after its passing and ratification, women are taking another shot at shifting our unspoken American paradigm of patriarchy with hashtags such as #MeToo and #ImWithHer. The movement has now come closer to home as Louisiana’s Secretary of State, Tom Schedler, fights allegations of sexual harassment.



Amid Dawn Ross’ February 2018 claim of sexual harassment, Schedler announced on March 14th that he would not seek re-election as he was determined to close out his incumbent term in 2020. However, according to The Louisiana Department of State, Schedler said he will fight the allegations and work to “make amends with his family, friends and colleagues who have been hurt by his actions.”

If there’s anything positive to be said in the midst of the turmoil its that the Secretary of State’s website presents an extremely user-friendly interface - offering: online voter registration, post-election data, small business registration, and even information regarding polling stations for voters.

Schedler officially landed his role as Secretary of State in 2010 - appointed to oversee: business registration, voting records, state archives, election systems, and state museums. Schedler also served as Chief Deputy to Secretary of State Jay Dardenne and was State Senator for St. Tammany Parish, District 11 from 1996-2008.

In the lawsuit filed Ross said Schedler made repeated sexual advances towards her over the course of her employment with the state which began in 2004. Ross also said that Schedler made her work life difficult, bought unwanted cards and gifts expressing his “love” for her, and even purchased a townhouse in the same building where she lived.

Ross now joins a host of women united through the #MeToo movement started in 2006 by Tarana Burke, who sought to help women tell their harrowing stories of harassment and abuse, and ignited by sexual assault allegations brought against film mogul Harvey Weinstein by actress Asia Argento.

A little over a week before Ross filed her lawsuit, Jim Walsh, a top Democrat consultant who co-founded DSPolitical and Rising Tide was accused of sexual assault by a woman who said Walsh assaulted her over a decade ago when she was 21-years-old.

As for Republicans, Elizabeth Esty is also under fire as one of her former staffers, Anna Kain submitted accusations of harassment to Esty's office at the hands of Tony Baker, who served as Esty's Chief of Staff. Kain, 29, said in an article published in the Connecticut Post that Esty punched her and threatened her life and as a result, she felt moved to start the Congress Too movement to shed light and push for reform in the way Capitol Hill handles sexual harassment. Esty will not seek reelection for 2019.

This issue leaves taxpayers to pay the burden of investigations conducted by the Congressional Office of Compliance. According to the Washington Post, from 2003-2017 sexual harassment lawsuits cost taxpayers nearly \$300,000.

The Post Bulletin, a Minnesota-based newspaper, highlights the chain reaction taking place in Washington D.C. and other places, where vast amounts of women are working to alter the political landscape as they run for both Congress and state office. Kathryn Pearson, a political science professor at the University of Minnesota said, "The #MeToo movement truly has spread to Congress and state Legislatures," Pearson said. "Several dozen elected officials have now faced allegations of sexual harassment. Some have resigned, some have said they will resign, and there's a moment to change laws in Congress and state legislatures." Most of these investigations have ended in the firing or the stepping down of over 60 politicians. The #MeToo movement has the potential to alter the current state of the republican majority in Congress.

According to Louisiana state law, it is illegal to create a hostile work environment or engage in what is known as *quid pro quo* ("this for that") harassment in which a supervisor can deny promoting an employee who refuses to engage in sexual favors. And now, based on a [revelation of emails and post cards](#) that proves embattled Secretary of State Tom Schedler, 60, made sexual advances toward former secretary for over a year, colleagues such as Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and Republican Senators John Kennedy and Bill Cassidy called on Schedler to resign. He has since decided to officially relinquish the office of Secretary of State effective by May 8th. The vacancy opens the way for First Assistant to the Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin to step in for Schedler until a special election is held to fill the remainder of Schedler's term on November 6, 2018.

*"Blaming victims and minimizing the harms they have suffered is much easier than holding people accountable — especially the powerful and well-connected." - Jackson Katz*

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