

Sexual harassment reporting necessary in workplace

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another victim."

According to the New York State Department of Human Rights, sexual harassment, in the form of a "hostile environment," consists of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence that are of a sexual nature, or that are directed at an individual because of that person's gender.

Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements, or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone in the workplace that are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, cause discomfort or humiliation, or interfere with his or her job performance.

In the Village of Freeport, annual sexual harassment training is mandatory for all employees. According to Conor Kirwan, the village's executive director of human resources, creating a workplace environment where employees and colleagues feel comfortable to report and address any wrongdoings is crucial.

"We cannot tolerate this kind of behavior by anyone at any time," Bermudez said.

U.S. Rep. Kathleen Rice, a Democrat from Garden City, has emerged as one of the most vocal proponents of ending sexual harassment in Congress. She appeared recently on CNN to call on Rep. John Conyers, 88, a Democrat from Michigan, to resign after allegations of sexual harassment surfaced against the 52-year congressman and one-time civil rights activist. Conyers stepped down last week.

Many people, it appeared, were at first reluctant to call on Conyers to resign. He was, his supporters said, an icon, having served in the

Korean War, marched during the civil rights movement and helped found the Congressional Black Caucus. Rice was not among those who were swayed by his record.

"When the recent wave of credible allegations of sexual harassment and assault reached Rep. John Conyers, my colleague in the House and a fellow Democrat, I felt we needed to show that we would no longer allow ourselves or our colleagues to be held

to a double standard," Rice said in a statement. "If we believe the women, as so many of us say we do, then we can't just go on serving alongside and working with colleagues who we believe have preyed on women.

"That's the standard we expect in the media, in entertainment and throughout the private sector, and the standard for public servants should, if anything, be even higher," she continued. "That doesn't mean that every politician who faces a single accusation should resign immediately. It means that if we believe the women, we should act accordingly. I believe

the women who accused Rep. Conyers."

She went on to say that she also believed the women who accused U.S. Sen. Al Franken, Rep. Ruben Kihuen and Rep. Blake Farenthold.

"I believe and I hope that we've made real progress on this issue over the past two weeks," Rice concluded. "We've identified what the standard should be for politicians who violate the public trust by harassing or assaulting women. Now we need to stick to it."

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MIGUEL BERMUDEZ
Chief, Freeport Police Department



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