Bullying of Teachers Pervasive in Many Schools

BY CINDY LONG (HTTP://NEATODAY.ORG/AUTHORS/CINDY-LONG)

Workplace bullying is on the rise. About a third of American workers have been impacted by bullying in the workplace.
either as a target or as witness to abusive behavior against a co-worker. Unfortunately, it’s even more prevalent in the field of education. In a recent survey of medium-sized school districts, 25 percent of employees reported that they had been bullied. The bullying of teachers has become a serious problem.

A teacher from Augusta, Maine, was so traumatized by her principal and superintendent that she didn’t want her name or school mentioned, but wanted to share her story because she believes the pervasive problem of workplace bullying has gone on unchecked for too long.

“I am sufficiently frightened enough by my former employers to fear that maybe they could still hurt me,” she says. “I need to get a new job but won’t be able to do so if I am unable to receive even one recommendation from an administrator. I know it and so do they.”

After the Augusta educator resisted being transferred to a new school and new grade level, she began to be scrutinized by her administrators. First, they began examining her test scores, her communications with parents, and her relationships with colleagues. Then, with no explanation and no warning, the principal began interrupting her class to pull out students one-by-one to talk to them. When the educator asked the students why they were being pulled out, they told her they were instructed not to tell.

She was accused of not using technology in her class, even though each student had a laptop. She was criticized for relying on a literacy mentor, even though some of her students were struggling with reading. She was put on a behavior modification plan and was told to submit her lesson plans a week in advance for review by administrators. Her peers warned her that she was being targeted, and she began to believe it. Finally, she left her job after her health began to deteriorate.
It's not just administrators bullying teachers, says Carv Wilson, a geography teacher at Legacy Junior High in Layton, Utah. He's been an educator for 18 years, and has seen teachers bullying each other to get their way, as well as aggressive parents who fly off the handle and threaten and intimidate their child's educators. But he says the worst case of ongoing workplace bullying he witnessed was by a principal.

“I was heavily involved in school leadership both as a Davis Education Association Rep and on the school representative counsel, and I heard about or witnessed first-hand the abuse of other teachers, staff, and students by this principal,” he says. “She specifically targeted individual teachers and the only thing that seemed to offer any protection was membership in our local association.”

Wilson says more than 60 percent of the educators were NEA members, and the other 30 percent “suffered dramatically at her hands.” The number of transfers out of the school was
higher than 50 percent each year of the eight years that she was principal of the school.

“She seemed to revel in people being driven out of education or to another school,” he says. “The memories of that time still haunt me from time to time, but it solidified my belief that having representation both in school and in the local community through the association is critical. It’s the only defense against unfair and even punitive measures that are sometimes solely prompted by personality conflicts.”

Denise Mirandola is a union representative for the Pennsylvania State Education Association who holds trainings for members called “Bullying in the Workplace.”

“I presented it at an Education Support Professionals meeting and was surprised to see so many heads nodding,” she says. “I believe that the phenomenon has been overlooked far too long and should be brought to the surface quickly.”

Like Wilson from Utah, she says association representation is vital if you’re being targeted by a workplace bully. The first thing you should do, in fact, is contact your union representative. Then, document, document, document – save emails, letters, memos, notes from conversations, or anything that shows the mistreatment. She also recommends confronting the bully with a supportive ally, like a union rep – and to describe the offensive behavior you’re experiencing, and the change in...
According to Dr. Matt Spencer of the Workplace Bullying in Schools Project (http://www.workdoctor.com/schools/), “the bully steals the dignity, self-esteem, confidence, joy, happiness, and quality of life of the targeted victim”. And when the target is an educator, it is a great “injustice” because the bully deprives students of a caring adult who is crucial to their education.

Currently there is no law in any state against workplace bullying, unless it involves harassment based on race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age or disability. Please support the Healthy Workplace Bill in your state. Go to www.healthyworkplacebill.org (http://www.healthyworkplacebill.org) for more information.

POSTED IN
Teachers and Their Classrooms: (http://neatoday.org/category/teachers-and-their-classrooms/) Job-Related Stress (http://neatoday.org/category/job-related-stress/)

Susan Nunes • 4 years ago
Never socialize with colleagues, ESPECIALLY in a school environment. They will backstab you in order to keep their jobs and often do it under pressure from senior administrators desiring to cover their rear ends. I know this from bitter experience. The last school I worked at the cliques were horrible; the principal was a total incompetent and allowed a poisonous environment to occur. It benefited her because she didn’t have to do the dirty work. It’s an old supervisory trick.

Val E. Forge • Susan Nunes • 2 years ago
When I started in 1985 about 80% minimum of the staff at my school were veterans of a strike that occurred about five years previous. They were the salt of the earth and it was an honor to serve with them. Many of the new hires (particularly the ones gunning to be administrators and will gun down [figuratively] any teacher to do it), are nauseating brown-nosers who couldn’t pack the strike veterans' lunches.

jo • Val E. Forge • a month ago
teachers that suck up to be administrators are the worse! they are willing to leave their morals at home and do WHATEVER it takes. Undermining other teachers, teaching in a way that they KNOW is not effective, and a willingness to do "anything" for a principal or administrator (and YES sexual favors are highly common though most occur with male administrators). I've seen it played out more times than I would like to remember throughout my 18 years.
32 Legislatures [30 States, 2 Territories] have introduced the HWB

I Want To Help!

Do you feel strongly that Workplace Bullying is wrong? Join the grassroots campaign. Volunteer to help State Coordinators enact the Healthy Workplace Bill. Volunteer to be a Coordinator in your state.

Join the Campaign Now

March 30th, 2016

**California “clarifies” Abusive Conduct training mandate**

On Jan. 1, 2015 California started mandating training in Abusive Conduct for supervisors (in employers with 50 or more workers). The definition was lifted verbatim from the WBI Healthy Workplace Bill (HWB) authored by Suffolk University Law Professor David Yamada.

WBI and its national network of volunteer State Coordinators has been lobbying for the complete HWB since 2001. Timid, business lobby-yoked state lawmakers are afraid to take a stand for workers who suffer health harm as the result of workplace bullying. Of course, the HWB does not include the phrase “workplace bullying.” The term used is “abusive conduct.”

California and Utah have mandated training. Utah’s 2015 legislation is superior to California’s, though it applies only to state agency employers. Utah requires that employers describe how they will provide protections to employees. California, at first, simply mandated the training. And the
topic of abusive conduct, which is still legal until the full HWB is enacted into law in California, is to be added to mandated training on the employer’s commitment to the prevention and resolution of illegal sexual harassment. Oops. This is confusing to nearly everyone. Many HR types hardly understand the power of having protected group status membership or not.

We worry that employees will conflate bullying (abusive conduct) with illegal forms of harassment, including exposure to a hostile work environment. They will falsely believe that abusive conduct is currently illegal because of the pairing with illegal forms of discrimination that violate state and federal laws.

Now comes an April 1 amendment to California Fair Employment and Housing Act Regulations. The section below shows the intended clarification regarding the content of the Abusive Conduct related to Government Code section 12950.1(g)(2).

The good news: the deleterious impact on the targets of abusive conduct must be discussed. Naturally, the negatives for the employer are to be included.

The bad news: the regulation lifts most of our HWB definition of abusive conduct but omits the critical element describing that personal health harm can be manifested. And time devoted to abusive conduct training should be “meaningful.” Still vague.

Read the amended, clarifying regulation for yourself.

(M) A review of the definition of “abusive conduct” as used in this context (and as defined by Government Code section 12950.1(g)(2). The training should explain the negative effects that abusive conduct has on the victim of the conduct as well as others in the workplace. The discussion should also include information about the detrimental consequences of this conduct on employers – including a reduction in productivity and morale. The training should specifically discuss the elements of “abusive conduct,” including conduct undertaken with malice that a reasonable person would find hostile or offensive and that is not related to an employer’s legitimate business interests (including performance standards). Examples of abusive conduct may include repeated infliction of verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, epithets, verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person’s work performance. Finally, the training should emphasize that a single act shall not constitute abusive conduct, unless the act is especially severe or egregious. While there is no specific amount of time or ratio of the training that needs to be dedicated to the prevention of abusive conduct, it should be covered in a meaningful manner.

Tags: AB2053, abusive conduct, supervisor training, training, Workplace Bullying

March 2nd, 2016

Calling all Maryland State employees

If you work for the State of Maryland, State Sen. Muse plans to convene a Task Force to study the extent and impact of workplace bullying and make recommendations. This is SB 689. It’s not a prohibitive law, but he clearly does care about bullying of State workers. In the past, he has been very sympathetic to bullied workers.

On Tuesday March 15 at 1 pm at the Capitol, the Senate Finance Committee will hear testimony on the bill.

State workers, take time off work to go testify. On the Maryland State Page, you can find the link to instructions to give testimony. The committee wants written statements prior to the scheduled hearing. Please read and follow the instructions.

Good luck on March 15!

On March 1, HB 1104, the same Task Force bill, was heard in the House Appropriations Committee. Union supporters included AFT, AFSCME and MPAC and one bullied MDOT former employee, You can view the video here on the State website, Testimony begins at time mark 4:09:40 and ends at 4:26:00.

Tags: Anthony Muse, Maryland, SB 689, state employees, Workplace Bullying

February 18th, 2016

West Virginia is back with Healthy Workplace Bill

WV State House Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, along with 8 co-sponsors introduced the Healthy and Safe Workplace Act (the Healthy
Workplace Bill). West Virginia was the 9th state to ever introduce the HWB.

It is HB 4363.

Find all the details at the West Virginia State Page at this HWW website. Contact info for all sponsors and all four committee chairs is provided for West Virginians to thank and implore legislators to pass the bill.

Tags: HB 4363, Healthy Workplace Bill, West Virginia
Posted in Uncategorized | Post a Comment »

February 14th, 2016

30th state introduces the Healthy Workplace Bill — Rhode Island

Rhode Island Sen. Frank Ciccone, long-time labor advocate, introduced SB 2377 on Feb. 10, 2016. It is the Healthy Workplace Act of 2016, the full version of the WBI Healthy Workplace Bill. Four other state senators signed on as co-sponsors.

SB 2377 makes Rhode Island the 30th state (and 32nd legislature in America) to introduce our bill.

Now it’s on to the Senate Labor Committee where it awaits a public hearing.

Visit the Rhode Island State Page for details and information about all the sponsors and committee chairs.

Tags: Frank Ciccone, Healthy Workplace Bill, Rhode Island, SB 2377
Posted in Uncategorized | Post a Comment »

February 14th, 2016

Maryland lawmakers aim for a Task Force on Bullying in State Agencies

In 2016, long-time advocate for Maryland state workers, Sen. Anthony Muse, introduced a bill to compel the state to study workplace bullying and its impact on those employees. SB 689 became a bill on Feb. 5, 2016. Sen. Muse’s bill was co-sponsored by five other Senators. If passed, the study of prevalence and impact within the state labor force by the Task Force is directed to be completed by the end of 2016.

House Delegate Patrick Young and 12 co-sponsors introduced the companion bill, HB 1104. The bill carries the exact wording.

Visit the Maryland State Page for details and complete contact information for all sponsors and committee chairs.

Tags: Delegate Patrick Young, Sen. Anthony Muse, Task Force
Posted in Uncategorized | Post a Comment »

January 28th, 2016

WA State re-introduces the HWB in 2016

ATTENTION WASHINGTON STATE RESIDENTS — ACT QUICKLY

Eleven Washington State House Representatives have sponsored the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill (HB 2894). Another 11 state Senators of both parties are sponsoring the Senate companion bill (SB 6532). The HWB defines health-harming abusive conduct and makes it unlawful for employers to allow it to happen.

This marks the return of the legislation to Washington, absent since 2012. Washington was the 4th state to ever introduce the legislation.

If you live in the state, please visit the WA State Page at the Healthy Workplace Bill website.
Contact information for all bill sponsors and committee members can be found there. You can also volunteer to testify or help the State Coordinator get the bill through committees and floor votes in a very short legislative session. TIME IS VERY LIMITED!

Tags: HB2894, Healthy Workplace Bill, SB6532
Post in Uncategorized | 1 Comment »

October 22nd, 2015

A look back at 2012 Freedom Week at the National Press Club: Tales from the Trenches

Lana Cooke, West Virginia State Coordinator, Healthy Workplace Bill campaign

Ernie Cooke, Lana’s supportive husband, Requiescat in pace dear gentle man

Target’s Spouse Becomes Advocate

Jane Bethel, Virginia State Coordinator, Healthy Workplace Bill campaign

Neil Dias, Verizon
October 22nd, 2015

2015 Freedom from Workplace Bullies Week: Oct 18-24

8th Annual WBI Celebration
DO SOMETHING POSITIVE!

- As Targets of bullying, shame paralyzes us and prevents us from defending ourselves.
- As members of Targets’ Families, we watch in horror as our loved ones’ lives unravel before our eyes.
- As Witnesses, fear of engagement, fear of threats to our own safety, prevent us from helping targets.
- As Managers, we lack the skills to stop it, confusing bullying with conflict, which we all abhor.
- As HR, we watch helplessly because laws do not compel policies that give us authority to act.
- As Union officers, we are too occupied with survival to see how much our members are suffering.
- As Owners/Executives, we wonder why some of the most admired managers are considered abusive.
- As State Lawmakers, we fear losing business lobby support, so we ignore the Healthy Workplace Bill.

Unrealistic fears, self-blame, rampant institutional indifference, and waiting for regulations are the excuses to not take positive prosocial action today to help those who are harmed by abusive conduct of others. How dare we turn our backs. Are we not moral human beings with empathy for the plight of oppressed peers?

So, just this one week of the year, let’s say “no” to all the rationalizations that sustain bullying in our workplaces. Open our eyes and see the harm caused.

Yes. Bullying costs employers. But bullying carries a tremendous human cost in terms of preventable stress-related injuries to the most capable workers among us.

DO SOMETHING POSITIVE! Visit the Freedom Week section of the WBI website.

Tell WBI the activity you plan for the week and we will post it here. Send message to namie at workplacebullying dot org.

Downloadable 2015 Flyers to print for your workplace.

Format #1
Format #2
Format #3

Tags: Freedom From Workplace Bullies Week, Workplace Bullying, workplace bullying institute

August 11th, 2015
**MA Healthy Workplace Bill moves to “Third Reading”**

As reported by David Yamada on his blog …

After being reported favorably out of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, the Massachusetts Healthy Workplace Bill has been moved to a procedural stage called “Third Reading,” which means it is now eligible for a full vote by the House of Representatives. As reported by Deb Falzoi on the Facebook page of the Massachusetts Healthy Workplace Advocates:

BREAKING NEWS: The Healthy Workplace Bill, HB 1771, has been ordered to a Third Reading in the House. This step is the furthest point the bill has gone in Massachusetts in previous sessions, but this session we’ve reached it much earlier in the session. Progress!

Without a doubt this is good news and increases the likelihood for a favorable result during the 2015-16 Massachusetts legislative session.

MA Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee recommends support of Healthy Workplace Bill

The Massachusetts Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee, an office appointed by the state’s Supreme Judicial Court “to enhance and protect the rights of persons with mental health concerns in key areas most closely related to their ability to live full and independent lives free of discrimination,” has submitted written testimony in support of the Healthy Workplace Bill. MHLAC senior attorney Susan Fendell, stated in her testimony that “(t)his bill, if passed into law, will profoundly improve people’s daily lives by creating positive and consequently more productive work environments.”

Attorney Fendell’s testimony shared the story of a client with a learning disability who was subjected to severe physical and verbal abuse by a new supervisor. The client filed a disability discrimination claim, but because he was not able to show that the mistreatment was grounded in his disability, he did not prevail. MHLAC offered this story as an example of the gap that needs to be filled by the Healthy Workplace Bill.

MHLAC’s welcomed statement of support highlights the potential power of the Healthy Workplace Bill to safeguard the mental health of all citizens.

Visit the [Massachusetts State Page](http://healthyworkplacebill.org/) to read the bill.

Tags: h1771, MA
Post in [Uncategorized](http://healthyworkplacebill.org/category/uncategorized/) | [Post a Comment »](http://healthyworkplacebill.org/)

August 3rd, 2015

**Bullies at Weatherford College find support in Truth-averse 5th Circuit Court of Appeals**

Workplace bullying is endemic in healthcare and education, including higher education, for reasons discussed elsewhere at the WBI website.

Now comes a story of an inept community college administration, at Weatherford College, unwilling to even consider complaints from a long-time faculty member. Professor Karen Lopez Austen about the abusive conduct she faced in the Athletics Department.

The [WBI 2014 U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey](http://healthyworkplacebill.org/) revealed that most employers deny complaints or justify them. In Austen’s case, they never considered the evidence she had assembled for the Board. An outsider can easily infer that the Administration, led by Kevin Eaton, had decided to not renew Dr. Austen’s contract, despite the legitimacy of her complaint.

So, as was her right, Dr. Austen filed a civil suit claiming sex and ethnicity discrimination along with retaliation for daring to hold the college accountable to operate lawfully and according to internal policies. She probably, like most bullied targets, especially highly educated individuals, expected to find justice in court. We constantly warn targets that justice is rarely found and almost never in court.

Remember, the college administrators refused to hear her complaint. The trial court judge did not allow Dr. Austen her day in court. Judges possess ultimate authority to grant access to their courts.

Judges have two avenues to end cases before they start — dismissal or summary judgement. Targets are typically plaintiffs who sue their employers, the defense. The defense files the motion to dismiss. Dismissal is based on [technical details of the case](http://healthyworkplacebill.org/) that have not been addressed ensuring that the law cannot relieve the problem — e.g., “including lack of subject matter jurisdiction, lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, insufficiency of process, insufficiency of service of process, failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or failure to join a necessary party.”

When the defense files a motion for summary judgement, it is saying that if the parties don’t dispute the material facts of the case, then the judge can determine whether the defendant is liable based simply on the pre-trial evidence assembled, if any exists. In the case Austen v. Weatherford College, there was no such agreement. The civil case was all about the disputed facts. The college said nothing happened. Dr. Austen said otherwise. Guess what. The judge in Federal District Court agreed with the college and threw out the case based on summary judgement.

In most cases, financially strapped terminated and unemployed targets go no further. But Dr. Austen filed an appeal with the federal Fifth Circuit. It
was no surprise that the Appellate Court upheld (agreed with) the pro-administration ruling of summary judgement. Remember, no entity had yet considered the evidence that plaintiff Austen had put together to prove her complaint of discrimination.

Austen’s attorney, Mark Robinett, at the Austin Texas firm of Brim, Arnett & Robinett. P.C., was shocked by the 5th Circuit Court’s ruling. What he found appalling was that his client’s evidence did not matter. In a general letter to the public, attorney Robinett wrote:

… the Court of Appeals held that her evidence did not matter, that she had failed to present a “prima facie” case or “rebut the legitimate reasons for termination (sic nonrenewal) offered by the college. The court also holds, as if it has some basis for making a fact finding (which is a “no-no” for an appellate court) that “(t)he six serious, documented instances of misconduct from the semester after the settlement agreement were the primary reasons for termination (sic nonrenewal).

Robinett, quoting the appellate court’s ruling stated

What matters is not the truth of the underlying complaints and reports, however, but rather whether the college could legitimately have relied on them in deciding to terminate Austen. The college could do so.

In fact, the college president, Eaton, mis-characterized Dr. Austen’s complaint to the Board. The Board never heard Austen’s perspective.

The injustices Austen faced was compounded by the 5th Circuit with its pro-institutional bias that claimed evidence did not matter. Robinett concluded that the court was doing a trial jury’s job without the benefit of live testimony or assessing the credibility of the Weatherford College administrators.

Read Attorney Robinett’s letter countering the assertion that Dr. Austen was not renewed for just reasons. She never got to tell her side of the story to an impartial court.

Justice in America?

Tags: 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, abusive conduct, dismissal, justice, Karen Lopez Austen, summary judgement, Weatherford College, Workplace Bullying

Posted in Uncategorized | 3 Comments »

OLDER ENTRIES →

About the Campaign

An Appeal to U.S. State Legislators

An Appeal to U.S. State...
This is the official home of the national grassroots legislative movement to enact the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill. The HWB is the boldest proposed change to U.S. employment law in 40 years. We are a volunteer network of citizen activists working since 2002 in many states to pass the bill into law.

Current discrimination and harassment laws rarely address bullying concerns. Bullying is four times more prevalent than illegal discrimination, but is still legal in the U.S. People deserve more protection against arbitrary cruelty that has nothing to do with work.

Download the History of the Healthy Workplace Bill.

*Sometimes I wonder if we shall ever grow up in our politics and say definite things which mean something, or whether we shall always go on using generalities to which everyone can subscribe, and which mean very little.* -- Eleanor Roosevelt