

**TESTIMONY OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
ON  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**OCTOBER 30, 2019**

Chairman Cox, Ranking Member Gohmert, good morning, and thank you for holding this hearing on this important topic and inviting me to update you on the progress that the Department has made and continues to make on the issue of sexual harassment. The Department is committed to preventing and eliminating all forms of harassing conduct and to transforming our workplace culture so our employees feel safe, respected, and valued.

In early 2017, the Department administered a Work Environment Survey to all employees, completed in March. The survey was the first of its scope done across the Department and its goal was to assess workplace conditions that Interior employees experience, including the prevalence and context of all forms of harassment. The results of that survey were sobering. Of those employees who responded to the survey, 35% reported experiencing some form of harassment and/or assault related behaviors in the 12 months preceding the survey. Several facts stood out: over 20% of employees reported experiencing harassment based on their age; 16.5% of employees reported experiencing gender-based harassment; and another 8% reported experiencing sexual harassment. What was especially troubling was that 60.2% of employees who reported that they had suffered from harassment indicated that these events occurred more than once, and often times the victim had to continue working with the harassing individual. Furthermore, many stated that they felt that making a complaint did not produce any real result—either no action was taken, or they were encouraged to drop the issue. The Secretary and the Department leadership team took these results very seriously and instituted a number of actions immediately. The first was the Secretary’s Anti-Harassment Policy Statement.

Then Deputy Secretary Bernhardt directed Bureau Heads to develop formal action plans to address their bureau survey results, with required quarterly reports. That same month, the Department issued its first comprehensive policy on the Prevention and Elimination of Harassing Conduct to provide a work environment free from harassing conduct and to hold employees accountable at the earliest possible stage

In February 2019, we created the Workplace Culture Transformation Advisory Council, and it is charged with identifying specific Department-wide programming.

In April 2019, the Department launched an enhanced agency-wide misconduct case tracking system which allows Interior to identify trends and to ensure that managers take action when harassing conduct has occurred.

In May 2019, six Department-specific harassment-related questions were included for the first time in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). I am pleased to report that the recent FEVS results for 2019 show that we are unquestionably making progress. For example, the percentage of Interior employees who reported experiencing some form of harassing conduct within the preceding 12 months was reduced from 35% in 2017 (as reported in the Work Environment Survey) to 18% in 2019. In addition, the number of employees who know where to report harassing conduct increased from 62.3% in 2017 to 94% in 2019. Moreover, more than 80% of supervisors and managers believe they have the tools needed to promptly address allegations of harassing conduct and to discipline individuals who engage in misconduct.

While this is all impressive, the July 2019 OIG Evaluation Report of the Department's efforts to address sexual harassment highlights that there is still work to be done. Let me first acknowledge and compliment the extensive work that the OIG undertook in this evaluation. In its evaluation, the OIG identified three areas for DOI to focus its efforts: improve sexual harassment investigations in terms of quality, cost, and timeliness; use misconduct tracking system to monitor trends and track costs; and better coordinate anti-harassment training. Within these areas, the OIG made 11 recommendations; and by the date of publication of the final report, the Department had already resolved and fully implemented three of those recommendations. The Department has developed an action plan for the completion of the remaining recommendations in advance of the original timeline given. For example, we are implementing Recommendation #11 regarding the coordination of anti-harassment training opportunities 8 months ahead of schedule. In response to Recommendation #5 regarding investigations of sexual harassment claims, we have already launched new data fields in our misconduct tracking system that will provide greater transparency regarding the timeliness of investigations which permit Bureaus to remedy any investigative delays.

In December, we will start delivering more than 70 sessions of bystander intervention and intergenerational training in strategic locations across the country. Each session will be four hours in duration and be presented to in-person audiences. We continue to communicate with and train leaders and employees everywhere and at every level of the organization about the Department's commitment to preventing and eliminating harassing conduct and cultivating work environments that are respectful, collaborative, fair, and honest. As recently as August 2019, we delivered a briefing to senior leaders within the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Following today's hearing, I will be taking part in a town hall meeting in Reston, VA with approximately 1,000 employees from the U.S. Geological Survey on DOI actions to improve and transform the workplace culture.

Secretary Bernhardt and the Department of the Interior are fully committed to building upon the critical activities accomplished in the last two years to fundamentally transform the way that employees interact with each other in the Department. As an agency, we have made significant progress in acknowledging and understanding and eliminating harassing conduct, holding employees and their managers accountable, and setting clear, enforceable standards of behavior.

Our efforts are both widespread and determined to change the culture here at the Department. There is more to be done, and we look forward to continuing our positive progress. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.