

BILLY SPIVEY
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
92nd HOUSE DISTRICT

205 WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243
PHONE: (615) 741-4170
FAX: (615) 253-0274

Rep.Billy.Spivey@Capitol.TN.gov

House of Representatives State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

COMMITTEES

VICE CHAIRMAN
EDUCATION INSTRUCTION &
PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

MEMBER
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
EDUCATION INSTRUCTION &
PROGRAMS SUBCOMMITTEE

September 27, 2016

Having recently received a brief but detailed report describing long-running hostile workplace conditions in the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, I feel compelled to call for an investigation of the charges contained therein.

The report in question, which I received from a concerned Legislative Plaza staffer and have attached below (with certain names redacted to provide a minimum level of protection), describes a workplace environment marked by mental and emotional abuse over an extended period of time. The report names specific individuals and describes specific instances of abuse.

The report charges that while leadership and senior staff have been aware of the situation, nothing has been done to properly address it. Perhaps most disturbingly, there is a claim that the only "solution" offered in response to the most egregious instance of abuse involved offering the victim a demotion, a pay cut, and a move to another office while the perpetrator of the abuse was to be left in place without formal penalty or reprimand. If true, this amounts to punishing a victim while enabling a victimizer. If true, this must be corrected.

Due to the credible, detailed nature of the claims made in this report, and the egregious nature of the conduct described therein, a full investigation of this situation is required.

Sincerely,



Representative Billy Spivey
District 92

Received report of workplace issues (with aforementioned redactions):

Rep. Spivey,

I hope you will take a moment to study the information below. I'm submitting this to you because I believe that something must be done about the hostile work environment in some offices at the Plaza. As a staffer I can say first hand that we live in constant fear of being fired and retaliation from those in leadership. This is one of the reasons I'm submitting this to you. All proper avenues have been exhausted and have resulted in no administrative action. Please keep the names of the victims private until necessary. **[Staffer 1]** is a dear friend of mine.

Subject Victim:

[Staffer 1]

Abuser:

Joe McCord

People Directly Involved:

Beth Harwell, Scott Gilmer, Joe McCord, ██████████, ██████████, ██████████.

What happened:

[Staffer 1] has experienced emotional and mental abuse from Chief Clerk Joe McCord on a regular basis. This abuse has been verbal. Joe has consistently referred to **[Staffer 1]** as an "asshole" and a "bitch." On Ag day a year or two back this abuse reached a peak.

[Staffer 1]'s 2.5 year old grand daughter ██████████ came to visit her at work. **[Staffer 1's Granddaughter]** was visiting **[Staffer 1]** in the Speaker's office. Joe saw her and asked **[Staffer 1]** "who is this?" **[Staffer 1]** responds "This is ██████████, My granddaughter." Joe then ask "How old she is?" **[Staffer 1]** responds "██████████ is 2 and a half." Joe responds by looking at **[Staffer 1's Granddaughter]** and flipping her his middle finger. This caused **[Staffer 1's Granddaughter]** to coward away from him. He looked at **[Staffer 1's Granddaughter]** while flipping her the bird and said "you better remember this."

[Staffer 1] trying not to break down in tears eventually went to the bathroom where she broke down crying. People witnessed her crying in the bathroom.

Eventually, [Staffer 1] discussed her abuse from Joe with the following people. An attorney, Beth Harwell, Scott Gilmer, Connie Ridley, [Staffer 2].

She spoke to [Staffer 2] about it as a friend. [Staffer 2] tried to walk her through her rights to not be abused by an authority figure.

Connie advised [Staffer 1] that she could go work for one of the Members of the black caucus but would have to take a demotion and pay cut.

At some point [Staffer 1] discussed the office environment with Speaker Harwell. Speaker Harwell listened to [Staffer 1]'s concerns but never took any disciplinary or official action against Joe McCord.