

When someone discusses the costs of sexual harassment, most people first think about a large lawsuit settlement or jury award they read in the news. These are the figures the public sees but the costs of sexual harassment are actually much higher.

Cases that go to trial can indeed have some high payouts - a nurse in New Jersey was awarded \$15 million for sexual harassment last year and as early as 1999, a Michigan jury awarded the first female millwright at Chrysler's Jefferson assembly plant \$21 million for sexual harassment. These stories are not isolated. In fact, one of the largest court awards in U.S. history came from Los Angeles County last year in a wrongful termination case - \$4.1 billion.

The costs of sexual harassment go well beyond the sensational court awards. Many cases never make it to court and many, many more are never even reported. In each of these cases, however, the costs are still quite high.

Sexual harassment has a devastating impact on the health of those affected by it. Studies universally demonstrate that harassment victims take more sick time and are less productive. These losses hurt not only the victim, but also co-workers who must pick up the slack and the company itself. Low productivity and higher turnover often go hand-in-hand with sexual harassment.

Although there is usually little sympathy for the person accused of harassment, they suffer lost productivity too. And often high legal bills.

As I write this, U.S. Senator John Ensign of Nevada has just disclosed that he paid \$551,000 in legal fees to 12 law firms just in the last 3 months. Ensign is fighting numerous ethics charges for allegedly covering up an affair with a female staffer.

Even if the allegations are not proven, the loss of reputation, loss of self-esteem and decreased productivity are difficult to measure but real. Add to the costs and time to investigate these claims and to defend against one of these charges and it is easy to see how expensive a problem sexual harassment has become.

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Brian Mahany and the law firm of Mahany & Ertl represent victims of sexual harassment and work place discrimination. Based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we handle discrimination cases in Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha, Sheboygan, Madison and all over the Midwest.

Before you look for another job or face another sleepless night worrying what might happen at work tomorrow, call us. We are more than sexual harassment

lawyers, we work with you to deliver a brighter future. And we are well versed in the state and federal anti- retaliation (whistleblower) laws that protect victims who come forward and say, “Enough!”

Brian can be reached through by phone at (414) 704-6731 or by email, [brian@mahanyertl.com](mailto:brian@mahanyertl.com). Our consultations are free, confidential and will provide you no nonsense answers to your questions.