

7 sorority sisters at University of Wyoming sue Kappa Kappa Gamma to challenge induction of transgender member

The members claim that inducting the transgender woman, identified by the pseudonym Terry Smith, in the fall of 2022 violated Kappa Kappa Gamma's bylaws.

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By Marlene Lenthang

Seven sorority members are suing the Kappa Kappa Gamma fraternity to challenge the induction of a transgender woman into the local chapter at the University of Wyoming.



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The suit, filed Monday in the U.S. District Court in Cheyenne, claims that allowing the transgender woman – identified by the pseudonym Terry Smith – to be a member violates the Kappa Kappa Gamma bylaws, which state the sorority is a “single-gender” organization.

The women filed the suit anonymously against the Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity based in Ohio, President of the Fraternity Council of Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity Mary Pat Rooney, the Kappa Kappa Gamma Building Co. and Terry Smith.

The suit seeks to make Smith’s membership void and seeks unspecified damages.

Kappa Kappa Gamma said in a statement, “We are aware of the litigation filed in this case and intend to address it through the legal process. While we cannot comment in detail on this pending litigation, it contains numerous false allegations.”

The organization added that it “values diversity” and does not discriminate based on gender identity.

Kappa Kappa Gamma Housing Company, Rooney and Smith did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Lawyers were not listed in online court documents for the defendants.

Smith, 21, was inducted into the Kappa Kappa Gamma chapter at the University of Wyoming in the fall of 2022.

The lawsuit argues that the sorority followed a 2018 “Guide for Supporting Our LGBTQIA+ Members,” which stated that Kappa Kappa Gamma admits both “women and “individuals who identify as women” in accepting Smith's membership.



— The Kappa Kappa Gamma house on the University of Wyoming campus. [Google maps](#)

The suit contends that the guide is an “unlawful abandonment of the sorority’s requirement for single-sex membership” and that the organization’s bylaws, standing rules and policies restrict membership to women and do not permit Smith’s membership.

“The Fraternity Council has betrayed the central purpose and mission of Kappa Kappa Gamma, by conflating the experience of being a woman with the experience of men engaging in behavior generally associated with women,” the complaint stated.

Smith identifies with female pronouns on Twitter. The suit said Smith wears women’s clothing “only occasionally” and has not undergone medical gender transition and identifies as a male on a Washington State Driver’s license, though Smith could have identified on it as female or “X” gender, the lawsuit said.

The suit claims that national sorority officials pressured the local chapter to violate sorority rules by allowing Smith to enter the sisterhood.

Typically all chapter members must vote on a new member, unless they are excused, and the vote takes place using an electronic voting system on the phone app “Omega Recruit.” But in Smith’s case, not all chapter member voted and the vote took place through Google Poll, the lawsuit said.

The plaintiffs also claimed Smith's membership application was evaluated using a different standard than other recruits as Smith had a cumulative GPA below the Kappa requirement of at least 2.7 GPA, as under the House Bylaws.

The suit also listed several instances in which Kappa Kappa Gamma members allegedly felt uncomfortable around Smith.

The suit said that Smith did not live in the sorority house, but would sit there for hours and allegedly stare at the women inside.

“One sorority member walked down the hall to take a shower wearing only a towel. She felt an unsettling presence, turned, and saw Mr. Smith watching her silently,” the suit said.

The complaint said that witnesses observed Smith sitting in a chair in the living room of the sorority house on multiple occasions staring at members walking in.

"Smith has, while watching members enter the sorority house, had an erection visible” through leggings, the complaint said.

The morning after a sleepover, prior to the Kappa initiation ceremony for new members, Smith’s conduct was described as “inappropriate and threatening,” according to the complaint.

Though Smith did not sleepover, Smith returned to the sorority house the following morning and “stood silently in the corner of the room near the door while other pledges changed from sleeping garments into other clothing,” the lawsuit said.

Smith allegedly saw a woman not wearing a bra change shirts. After that incident, “other Kappa members informed Ms. Doe VI that while watching her” Smith had “become sexually aroused,” the complaint said, and Smith allegedly “repeatedly asked” Doe VI about her romantic attachments after the encounter.

The plaintiffs claimed that they reached out to national sorority officials on several occasions either on their own or via attorneys, but “their concerns were dismissed.”

The suit said that only 10 of more than 40 chapter members living in the sorority house have signed new housing contracts to live there next year, which the suit contends is due to a lack of privacy given Smith’s access to it.

The complaint also noted that Congress created an exception to Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funding, allowing social sororities and fraternities to keep their organizations single-sex.

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