



Congress paid out \$17 million in settlements. Here's why we know so little about that money.

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being groped and kissed without her consent by Sen. Al Franken in 2006.

So far, there's been little specific data to help illuminate just how pervasive sexual harassment is on Capitol Hill, but one figure has emerged: the total that the Office of Compliance, the office that handles harassment complaints, has paid to victims.

On Thursday, the Office of Compliance released additional information indicating that it has paid victims more than \$17 million since its creation in the 1990s. That includes all settlements, not just related to sexual harassment, but also discrimination and other cases.

An OOC spokeswoman said the office was releasing the extra data "due to the interest in the awards and settlement figures." The OOC has come under fire in recent days for what lawmakers and Hill aides alike say are its antiquated policies that do not adequately protect victims who file complaints.

CNN has also learned that during the current Congress, no settlement payment approval requests have been made to the congressional committee charged with approving them.



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Here's what we know – and what we don't know – about that money:

When was this money paid out?

office but rather comes out of a special fund set up to handle this within the US treasury – meaning taxpayers are footing the bill. The fund was set up by the Congressional Accountability Act, the 1995 law that created the Office of Compliance.

How many of the settlements were sexual harassment-related?

It's not clear. Speier told CNN's Wolf Blitzer on Wednesday that the 260 settlements represent those related to all kinds of complaints, including sexual harassment as well as racial, religious or disability-related discrimination complaints. The OOC has not made public the breakdown of the settlements, and Speier says she's pursuing other avenues to find out the total.

In its latest disclosure, the OOC said that statistics on payments are “not further broken down into specific claims because settlements may involve cases that allege violations of more than one of the 13 statutes incorporated by the (Congressional Accountability Act).”

Who knows about the settlements and payments?

After a settlement is reached, a payment must be approved by the chairman and ranking member of the House administration committee, an aide to Chairman Gregg Harper, a Mississippi Republican, told CNN.

The aide also said that “since becoming chair of the committee, Chairman Harper has not received any settlement requests.” Harper became chairman of the panel at the beginning of this year.

It's not clear how many other lawmakers – if any – in addition to the House administration

When asked about Ryan's knowledge of any sexual harassment settlements, a spokesperson for Ryan's office noted that the committee is conducting a full review of workplace harassment and discrimination.

What do these settlements tell us about the scope of the sexual harassment problem on Capitol Hill?

It is unclear how much of the \$17 million is money paid to sexual harassment cases because of the Office of Compliance's complex reporting process. However, even knowing that dollar figure doesn't quantify the problem: a source within the Office of Compliance tells CNN that between 40 and 50% of harassment claims settle after mediation – an early stage in the multi-tiered reporting process.

And the number of settlements reached may not be indicative of how widespread sexual harassment is, as many victims chose not to proceed with OOC's process for handling complaints. Tracy Manzer, a spokeswoman for Speier, told CNN last week 80% of people who have come to their office with stories of sexual misconduct in the last few weeks have chosen not to report the incidents to the OOC.

This story has been updated to include additional information from the Office of Compliance.

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