

From the Desk of
Senator
James Ivory Manning Jr.



SUPPORT HB 3279 TO HELP PREVENT SEXUAL ASSAULT OF OREGON'S JANITORIAL WORKERS

PROBLEM

The janitorial industry employs 24,800 janitors in Oregon, mostly women who clean office buildings alone at night in isolated areas. These working conditions make them targets to predatory behavior by the same people who supervise them. The types of predatory behavior and abuses range from bullying, wage theft, sexual harassment and rape. Women in Oregon face the second highest frequency of reported rape and sexual assault in the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics has found that eight percent of reported rapes in the U.S. occur while the victim is working.

Many of these janitors are not hired by building owners and property managers directly, but by janitorial subcontractors. Even where legal protections exist, these industries are especially vulnerable to fly-by-night contractors and subcontractors who can dissolve the business rather than be held accountable for wrongdoing in the workplace.

One serious allegation comes from the downtown Portland, according to a sexual harassment suit filed last year. According to five janitors who worked there, a manager working for building owner snapped janitors' bras, touched their hair, buttocks, and rubbed up against them, and made lewd comments about their bodies and his own anatomy. One of the janitors says she began locking the bathroom stalls behind her when she cleaned the toilets to prevent the supervisor from sneaking up behind her.

This case is being addressed in court, but too often, victims of workplace sexual violence choose not to report because of fears of not being believed or shamed by the people to which they report and concerns about confidentiality. As a result, more than 60 percent of workplace rape and sexual assault cases go unreported. That's the lowest reporting rate among all violent crimes in the workplace. For this reason, it is crucial that in high-risk industries, proactive measures are in place to deter workplace sexual violence, and to inform victims of their rights to report it.

SOLUTION

HB 3279 would require contracted janitorial firms to register with BOLI who will ensure these janitorial contractors and subcontractors have the sexual harassment and cultural competency training needed to help prevent sexual assault. The employers will be tested on their knowledge of responsibility to prevent sexual assault in the workplace.

VOTE YES ON HB 3279