Today's Lead: Leaders Shielded Lopez

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The state's ethics commission issued a report yesterday that not only detailed a torrent of inappropriate behavior by Assemblyman Vito Lopez but that tore into Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and his staff for shielding the lawmaker. At one point after two women made sexual harassment complaints against Lopez the report states that Silver's office relocated the women to other positions which enabled Lopez to hire two more women who he also harassed. The report details Lopez asking a staffer to give him eye drops for pink eye, demanding staffers share hotels with them, forcing them to feel his tumors, looking for a large apartment in Albany to share with one of them and perhaps most shockingly Lopez demanded a female staffer continue massaging his hand after the woman told Lopez she was uncomfortable because she had been raped in college. The Joint Commission on Public Ethics' report was released after a special prosecutor found no criminal wrongdoing by Lopez or Silver. Lopez issued a statement saying he was under attack by people wishing to destroy him. JCOPE's report was released by the legislature after facing mounting pressure. Members of the legislature also tried to redact large swaths of the report relating to the performance of Assembly staffers during the matter. JCOPE, which has members appointed by Silver, did not authorize an investigation into the behavior of Silver and the Assembly in the matter. Yesterday, Silver's spokesman defended him in a statement and Silver renewed his call for Lopez to resign.

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