Today's Lead: Federal, State Suits Filed Against Lopez, Silver

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Two female Assembly staffers have filed federal and state lawsuits against Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Assemblyman Vito Lopez. The women allege that Lopez repeatedly made unwanted sexual advances. In one case Lopez reportedly
 told a staffer
she should have sex with a Cuomo administration official to get a housing bill passed. The lawsuits allege that
Silver provided "assistance"
to Lopez that allowed him to continue harassing the women. Silver came to a secret settlement with two other women who Lopez harassed and allowed Lopez to hire the two staffers who have since brought other sexual harassment claims and these two lawsuits. The incidents have shined a spotlight on the
culture of sexual harassment
in Albany. Lopez resigned his seat after intense pressure and facing a vote that would have expelled him. He is still likely to face over $300,000 in fines from the legislative ethics board. Silver has apologized for his handling of the incident but has brushed off calls for his resignation.

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