



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 31, 2011

Women Accused Herman Cain of Sexual Harassment

Just as GOP presidential contender Herman Cain was enjoying his jump in the polls to front-runner status, breaking news has erupted that could damage, if not destroy, his campaign. Politico reported Sunday that two women accused Cain of inappropriate behavior during his 1996-99 tenure as president and CEO of the National Restaurant Association.



According to Politico: "Two women complained of sexually suggestive behavior by Cain that made them angry and uncomfortable, the sources said, and they signed agreements with the restaurant group that gave them financial payouts to leave the association. The agreements also included language that bars the women from talking about their departures."

While exiting the CBS building in Washington, D.C. after appearing on the CBS program *Face the Nation* this weekend, Cain was drawn into a "tense sidewalk encounter," writes *Politico*, where he avoided a number of questions regarding the sexual harassment allegations.

"Have you ever been accused, sir, in your life of harassment by a woman?" asked the reporter. According to Politico, Cain "breathed audibly, glared at the reporter and stayed silent for several seconds." The question was repeated by the reporter several times before Cain responded, "Have you ever been accused of sexual harassment?"

Cain did say, however, that he has "had thousands of people working for me" at a variety of different businesses over the years and that he needs "some facts or some concrete evidence."

Politico was the first to report on the alleged harassment, and has reportedly confirmed the identities of the two women, though keeping private their names.

Weeks ago, Politico reportedly learned of the allegations but waited for the opportunity to "put together accounts of what happened by talking to a lengthy roster of former board members, current and past staff, and others familiar with the workings of the trade group at the time Cain was there."

That evidence includes documentation that specifically describes the allegations and reveals the restaurant association's resolution of the matter, in which both women in question received severance packages reportedly as high as five figures.

Close associates described in detail their recollections of the incidents involving the two women: conversations which reportedly made the women uncomfortable because of sexual innuendo and personal questions of a sexual nature, all of which allegedly took place at National Restaurant Association events. Others indicated that the two women were made more uncomfortable because of physical gestures that were not necessarily overtly sexual but were enough to make them feel that Cain



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was engaging in improper work relationships.

One source said, "I happen to know there were sealed settlements reached in the plural. I think that anybody who thinks this was a one-time, one-person transgression would be mistaken."

A former member of the restaurant association board stated that one of the female accusers "was offered a financial package to leave the association, and she did." That source went on to say, "What I took offense at was that it was clear that rather than deal with the issue, there was an effort to hush it up. She was offered a way out to keep quiet."

Another source indicated that the woman had explained at the time that she would be leaving the restaurant association because she had suffered "an unwanted sexual advance" from Cain at a hotel during one of the restaurant association events. And a third source said that the woman told her current employer about the compensation package from the association and warned that employer that she might soon be the subject of an embarrassing story involving a presidential candidate.

The identity of the second female accuser was confirmed by a source familiar with the restaurant association.

Cain's camp has resisted calls for Cain to make a statement regarding the allegations of sexual harassment, and have thus far refused to answer any questions on the specifics, even regarding the alleged financial settlements in both cases.

However, Cain campaign vice president for communications J. D. Gordon did tell Politico that Cain said he had been "vaguely familiar" with the charges in question and that the matter had already been resolved by the restaurant association's general counsel.

Politico first attempted to reach Gordon to get clarification on the complaints of sexual harassment. After several days, Gordon emailed Politico and indicated that any dispute regarding Cain's behavior while with the restaurant association "was settled amicably among all parties many years ago." (Gordon later contacted *Politico* to indicate that when he used the term "settled," he did not mean in a legal context, but rather that the issue had been "resolved.")

The email continued, "These are old and tired allegations that never stood up to the facts.... Dredging this up now is merely part of a smear campaign meant to discredit a true patriot who is shaking up the political status quo. Since critics haven't had much luck in attacking Mr. Cain's ideas, they are trying to attack him personally."

According to Gordon, he had contacted Cain to discuss the allegations. Gordon told Politico, "[Cain] was vaguely familiar with it and wanted me to get with the National Restaurant Association lawyer who worked the case, Peter Kilgore. [Cain] said, 'Just get with Peter Kilgore at the NRA.' He remembered there was something vaguely, some allegation, but he wasn't familiar with it. Our lawyer called Peter Kilgore. Their policy is they don't discuss personnel. That's what our lawyer then told me."

Gordon added, "When you're in a leadership position, sometimes people just try to take a shot at you."

Meanwhile, Kilgore gave Politico the following statement:

Please understand that our corporate policy is not to discuss personnel matters (other than to confirm employment and dates of employment) with outside sources, including media. Thus, I must respectfully decline to comment on your questions or any allegations you may be looking into that concern current or former employees of the association.



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After Politico broke the story this weekend, the Cain camp released a statement targeting the media, asserting. “Political trade press are now casting aspersions on his character and spreading rumors that never stood up to the facts.” The statement continued:

Fearing the message of Herman Cain, who is shaking up the political landscape in Washington, Inside the Beltway media have begun to launch unsubstantiated personal attacks on Cain. Sadly, we’ve seen this movie played out before — a prominent Conservative targeted by liberals simply because they disagree with his politics.

Cain reportedly had warned at least one of his campaign staffers that claims of sexual harassment could surface during the campaign, but indicated that the woman had levied charges against Cain after she was fired, and that she was ultimately forced to pay his legal fees after the matter had been settled.

It remains to be seen just how dramatically these revelations may impact Cain — already facing some harsh scrutiny for his 9-9-9 economic plan, as well as criticism for his “unorthodox campaign.”

Photo: Republican presidential candidate, Herman Cain wipes his forehead before answering questions about sexual harassment allegations at the National Press Club in Washington, Oct., 31, 2011: AP Images



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