

On January 5, 2015, I began working with the Wilson County Board of Education as the Board Secretary. I worked very closely with each one of our five (5) Board Members at any given time. As part of my many duties I was responsible for scheduling travel arrangements for all Board functions that the Board Members were to attend, including overnight hotel stays for out of town conferences. Some members preferred double rooms, and some preferred king rooms, depending on whether they were taking a spouse or significant other contingent on when or where we were going at the time.

On Thursday, April 28, 2016, as I was preparing to leave the office with Angela Norris and Lisa Spencer, I received a phone call on my work landline phone from Board Member, Mr. Wayne McNeese. During our call, I reminded him of the upcoming conference and needed to know his preference in room choice. His statement to me was *"I don't care what bed I have as long as I'm sharing a bed with you"*. The statement threw me off guard quite a bit and I quickly changed the subject and got off the phone. I then left the office with Angela and Lisa heading downtown. During our car ride, and still stunned that Mr. McNeese would speak to me in that manner, I talked about what happened with both ladies. Mr. McNeese had always been a little "off color" on occasion, but never to that extent, and never to the point of being sexual in nature or blatantly offensive that way. I was just simply shocked and offended. I was also embarrassed that this happened to ME.

The ladies and I had finished our business downtown and on the car ride back I received a phone call from Mrs. Sparks. She was already aware of the call that I received from Mr. McNeese. Lisa Spencer had called her and given her some information about the situation. When Angela, Lisa, and I were in the car talking, I was venting and talking to my 'friends', not thinking about the fact that Lisa worked in Human Resources herself and had to report the situation to Mrs. Sparks. I was instructed by Mrs. Sparks to come back to the office that afternoon and speak to her to directly go over the details of the entire conversation again. I also spoke with Dr. Wright, and Mr. Hall, Deputy Director of Wilson County Schools, to let them know what was said. From my understanding, Mr. Jennings, the School Board Attorney, was also brought in on it at some point over the weekend. I was told that Mr. McNeese was going to be spoken to. I asked that when that time came, please let me know so I would not be blindsided, in the event he retaliated against me in any way. The following Monday night, May 2, 2016, there was a Board Meeting scheduled. Prior to the meeting, Mrs. Sparks came to

me and informed me that Mr. Jennings had already taken Mr. McNeese into another room as soon as he arrived and spoke with him privately about making off color remarks to employees. I was told that Mr. Jennings never stated which employee he was referring to, but Mr. McNeese immediately said, "Do you mean Kelie Ford?" I am unaware of any further details of the conversation between Mr. Jennings and Mr. McNeese.

Mr. McNeese subsequently canceled his reservation for that upcoming conference he was scheduled to attend the following weekend, and I believe he also cancelled his reservation for the one following conference as well. From that day forward Mr. McNeese no longer addressed me as Kelie as he always had done in the past, he only addressed me at the meetings as "The Board Secretary". He would never say my name. There were several occasions that I would pass by Mr. McNeese and I would hear him mumble under his breath. I cannot say for sure that his remarks were all intended for me, but I know a couple of times that I am certain they were. We did exchange words at one Board Meeting that I finally told him to "Go f**k yourself". I had really reached my breaking point with him being rude to me. This incident took place at our former location on Stumpy Lane.

I had spoken to Dr. Wright, Mr. Hall, Mrs. Sparks, and Mr. Tomlinson, the School Board Chair, on several occasions about the issues I was having with Mr. McNeese and how uncomfortable I felt working so closely with him. I was repeatedly told that there was nothing we can do because he is an Elected Official. I was still having to communicate with him on a regular basis. I was still having to work side by side with him at Board Meetings. I was still having to get his computer set up for him prior to Board Meetings, having to kneel, stoop, or stand with him sitting less than 2 feet away from me. I did not want him to look at me or watch me, and I was concerned that he might touch me inappropriately.

I wanted to speak with Mr. Jennings about possibly filing a Sexual Harassment case or help with how to handle the situation, but I could not get an appointment with him after trying for several weeks. One afternoon, I finally reached out to Mr. Tomlinson and he was able to get the appointment set up that very day. When I finally did meet with Mr. Jennings at his office, I was able to tell him EXACTLY how I was feeling having to work side by side with Mr. McNeese and I was looking for guidance on what action I should take. While speaking with Mr. Jennings, I began to cry and became upset. Mr. Jennings's response to me was "Maybe you should look into getting some counseling because it looks like it helps you to talk

about it". Naturally, I left his office in tears and was consoled by Ms. Fox, Mr. Jennings assistant at that time, as I left. I later went back to the Central Office to let Dr. Wright and Mr. Hall know what his suggestion was. Both were stunned by his comment and suggestion.

Months went by, then years went by. The mumblings from Mr. McNeese continued. The uncomfortable feelings continued. However, I finally became 'Kelie' again to Mr. McNeese. We still had to attend workshops together, conferences together, meetings together. Nothing changed for him. I just had to live with it and face the man that had sexually harassed me, the man that asked me to share a bed with him.....every day.

When we worked at the Central Office, our Board Room was set up so that I was not directly seated next to Mr. McNeese. I had another Board Member as a buffer between he and I. Once we moved to the new Wilson County Board of Education Administrative Training Complex, our Board Room was set up so that I no longer had that buffer between us. I was now seated right next to Mr. McNeese. We now sat approximately 3 feet apart. Once again, nothing changed.

Prior to my resignation from my position on July 31, 2018, I reached out to Dr. Wright, Mrs. Owens (Presently head of Human Resources) , and Lisa Spencer wanting to know if any of the Sexual Harassment issue that I had reported were ever documented in my employee file or documented in his employee file. The answer was NO. I also reached out to Mr. Jennings via e-mail, asking if he documented the Sexual Harassment issue that I reported to him. I never received any answer back from him on this matter after numerous attempts.

I knew if Mr. McNeese did it to me, he would do it again. I am sure I was not the first, and I KNEW I would not be the last. This is very unfortunate.

There was not an Ethics Committee when I worked for Wilson County Board of Education. Now that there is, use your powers for good and do the RIGHT thing. These comments are not a joke, they are not funny, and they are not to be said in passing. They cross the line and are offensive.

Thank you,
Kelie Ford