

# Exclusive: 1996 court document confirms Tara Reade shared Biden harassment allegation | San Luis Obispo Tribune

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A court document from 1996 shows former Senate staffer Tara Reade told her ex-husband she was sexually harassed while working for Joe Biden in 1993.

The declaration — exclusively obtained by The Tribune in San Luis Obispo, California — does not say Biden committed the harassment nor does it mention Reade's more recent allegations of sexual assault.

Reade's then-husband Theodore Dronen wrote the court declaration. Dronen at the time was contesting a restraining order Reade filed against him days after he filed for divorce, Superior Court records show.

In it, he writes Reade told him about “a problem she was having at work regarding sexual harassment, in U.S. Senator Joe Biden's office.”

It appears to be the only written record that has surfaced from the time that substantiates Reade shared her account in the years following the alleged incident, though a former neighbor came forward last week about similar conversations she said she had with Reade in 1995.

The news came as Reade was preparing for the release of her [first on-camera interview](#) since the former vice president and presumptive Democratic nominee for president personally denied the allegations May 1 on MSNBC. Former Fox News host Megyn Kelly [tweeted](#) about the interview Thursday morning, calling it “a riveting exchange.” She did not indicate when it would be published.

In the filing dated March 25, 1996, Dronen testified that he met Reade in the spring of 1993 while the two worked for separate members of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Dronen wrote that Reade told him she “eventually struck a deal with the chief of staff of the Senator’s office and left her position.”

“It was obvious that this event had a very traumatic effect on (Reade), and that she is still sensitive and effected (sic) by it today,” Dronen wrote.

Dronen filed the record in response to a similar declaration written by Reade in support of her restraining order request, in which Reade described incidents of abuse throughout her life. [In interviews with The Tribune](#) and other media, Reade has identified herself as a domestic violence survivor and victim’s advocate.

Though the ex-husband disputed many statements Reade made in her declaration, he wrote at the time that the alleged incident in Biden’s office and others described in the document “color (Reade’s) perception and judgment” of her civil case.

Reade has recently said that in 1993, Biden pushed her up against a wall in a semi-private hallway, reached under her skirt, and digitally penetrated her with his fingers.

Her account has changed over time. In 2019 she was one of eight women [to accuse Biden of unwanted touching](#), but not sexual assault.

## Response to the court document

Asked for comment Thursday, the national press secretary for Biden's presidential campaign, T.J. Ducklo, said the campaign is not commenting on the latest development at this time.

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Reade's New York-based attorney, Douglas Wigdor, also provided a statement to The Tribune on Thursday:

“The affidavit from Ms. Reade's ex-husband is further support that Ms. Reade was sexually assaulted and sexually harassed by then Senator Joe Biden,” Wigdor wrote in an email. “Ms. Reade's account of what happened

will shortly be aired in an interview by Megyn Kelly and I am confident that the American public will see her genuine veracity.”

Reade, 56, told The Tribune last week that she does not plan to vote in the upcoming presidential election in November. She has called for Biden to “stand up” and “step down” from the presidential race, but also said she does not support U.S. President Donald Trump.

“I would say stand up and take full account for what you’ve done and for your past treatment of women,” Reade told The Tribune in a phone interview on May 1, when asked what she would like to say to her former boss. “He holds himself up as a champion of women, but the fact remains that his personal life did not reflect his public life.”

“I want him to address it, and admit it, and modify his behavior, and step down,” she added.

“The fact that we have two men running for the highest office in the land, both with a history of misogyny and sexual misconduct, says more about our culture than anything,” she said.

Dronen, who still lives in San Luis Obispo County, confirmed he wrote the declaration.

“Tara and I ended our relationship over two decades ago under difficult circumstances,” Dronen said in an email to The Tribune on Thursday. “I am not interested in reliving that chapter of my life. I wish Tara well, and I have nothing further to say.”

## Read shared allegations with her mother and a friend

Reade, who now lives in Northern California, lived in Morro Bay off and on in the 1990s. At the time of her divorce, she worked for [then-state Sen. Jack O'Connell](#), who represented San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties on California's Central Coast.

In interviews with several national newspapers and [politics podcaster Katie Halper](#), who broke the story of the assault allegations on March 25, Reade said that in the spring or summer of 1993, she was told to meet Biden inside a somewhat private corridor to deliver a duffel bag.

There, Reade said, Biden pushed her up against a wall, reached under her skirt, and penetrated her with his fingers. When she resisted his advances, Reade said, Biden became annoyed and said, "Aw, man. I heard you liked me."

Biden then pointed a finger at her and said, "You're nothing to me," Reade alleges. After that, she said, he shook her by the shoulders and said, "You're OK, you're fine," before walking away, according to several media reports.

Reade declined to discuss specifics of the alleged assault with The Tribune, referring a reporter to her account published on Harper's podcast and by Business Insider.

The New York Times in April [interviewed dozens of former Senate staffers](#), a few of whom worked in Biden's office at the same time as Reade. They told the publication they do not recall talk of any such incident. The newspaper's investigative team was unable to verify Reade's claims.

The story gained momentum on April 24, when [The Intercept uncovered and published](#) a 58-second video clip of a woman from San Luis Obispo County — Reade identified the caller as her mother, who died in 2016 — calling in to an August 1993 segment on CNN’s “Larry King Live.”

“I wonder what a staffer would do besides go to the press in Washington,” the caller says in the segment, which was reportedly titled, “Washington: The Cruellest City on Earth?” and examined an allegedly toxic work environment in the nation’s capital.

“My daughter has just left there, after working for a prominent senator, and could not get through with her problems at all, and the only thing she could have done was go to the press, and she chose not to do it out of respect for him,” she says.

King responds in the video: “In other words, she had a story to tell, but out of respect for the person she worked for, she didn’t tell it?”

“That’s true,” the caller replies.

King’s panel does not offer the caller advice in the 58-second clip released by The Intercept.

On April 27, Business Insider published an article featuring Lynda LaCasse, a former neighbor of Reade’s from Morro Bay who confirmed that Reade told her about the alleged assault in the mid-1990s.

The San Luis Obispo Tribune has been unable to reach LaCasse for comment.

LaCasse, who is reportedly a retired former medical staff coordinator and emergency room clerk, lived next door to Reade in 1995 and 1996 in an apartment complex in Morro Bay, Business Insider reported.

“I remember her saying, here was this person that she was working for and she idolized him,” LaCasse told The Insider. “She felt like she was assaulted, and she really didn’t feel there was anything she could do.”

LaCasse said that her friend was “devastated” by the incident, and she remembered urging her to report it to police.

## Reade says she filed a complaint with Senate

Reade [filed a report with the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department](#) in April, but a Police Department spokesperson told Business Insider that an investigation into the complaint was inactive.

There is currently no statute of limitations on sexual misconduct in the nation’s capital, after the passage of a new law that [went into effect May 3](#).

She also claims to have filed a complaint to the Senate following the alleged assault, but [told the Associated Press](#) on May 1 that she did not use the phrase “sexual harassment” in the complaint. However, she said she believed that was the behavior she was describing.

“I talked about sexual harassment, retaliation. The main word I used — and I know I didn’t use sexual harassment — I used ‘uncomfortable,’” she told the AP.

In his appearance on MSNBC earlier that day, Biden said he called for the National Archives to release any records of Reade's complaint. The agency said it didn't have any.

Biden then [sent a letter](#) to the secretary of the Senate to "request your assistance in determining whether 27 years ago a staff member in my United States Senate office filed a complaint alleging sexual harassment," the letter reads.

But the Senate secretary [rejected the request](#), saying that the Senate's legal counsel advised that the secretary has "no discretion to disclose any such information."

On MSNBC, Biden vehemently denied Reade's allegations.

"No, it's not true. I'm saying unequivocally it never, never happened. And it didn't," Biden told host Mika Brezezinski.

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