

# Sex bias in DA's office alleged

District Attorney  
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8-5-98  
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Prosecutor

A veteran Santa Cruz County prosecutor sued the district attorney's office Tuesday, alleging she was demoted for complaining of sexual discrimination by her supervisor.

claims in

lawsuit

that her

complaints

about

supervisor

led to

demotion

Patty Bazar, an assistant district attorney with the county since 1980, alleged in the suit that she was transferred out of a prestigious sex-crimes unit in September after complaining of hostile treatment by her supervisor, Mike Bartram.

Bartram retired in December. District Attorney Art Danner said Bazar's gender-bias claims were groundless and that the transfer stemmed from her poor job performance.

"I would not tolerate any issue of gender bias in the office," Danner said. "Her issues that caused her transfer were performance-related. I agreed to the decision based on what I believed to be convincing evidence."

Bazar was hired in January 1980 as an assistant district attorney and was promoted during the next three years, serving as supervisor for the Municipal Court, preliminary hearing and Watsonville court divisions.

The trouble began in August 1996 when Bazar was promoted to a special unit prosecuting sexual assaults, headed by Bartram. According to the suit, Bazar complained to Danner at the time that Bartram had a "terrible reputation among women lawyers." She noted in the lawsuit that Bartram had been sued for sexual discrimination while he served as district attorney for Monterey County.

She further alleged that one female prosecutor was reassigned because Bartram "would not be supervised

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by a woman" and said at least one other female prosecutor had complained about him.

Upon taking her new assignment, Bazar suggested to Danner that she lead the unit instead of Bartram, but the district attorney declined the request, the suit said.

Over the next year, Bartram allegedly waged a campaign to discredit Bazar by complaining to their superiors and others that she was losing cases and allowing them to languish, and that she was frequently absent from her office, the suit said.

Bazar responded in court papers that her absences were due to field work interviewing crime victims. She claimed in the lawsuit that Bartram was overloading her with assignments, dumping difficult cases on her and only tried two cases himself while they worked together.

On Sept. 29, Danner approved a recommendation by Chief Deputy

District Attorney Kate Canlis, his second in command, to transfer Bazar from the sex-crime unit to general felonies. The decision was based on her alleged excessive absences, court delays and poor case resolution, the lawsuit says.

Bazar alleged in court papers that Danner and Canlis were unable to provide specific examples and said the reasons they cited for her transfer were "a pretext and a ruse" offered by Bartram to get rid of her. In October, Bazar complained to the county's affirmative-action office. That month, her cases were reassigned to other prosecutors in the office, and a month later she was assigned to work under a junior prosecutor, the suit said.

On Dec. 1, Ana Ventura Phares of the county's affirmative action office issued a statement finding no direct evidence of gender bias against Bazar. But she added that there was a perception among prosecutors that gender played a major role in attorney assignments and promotions,

the suit said.

Bazar further alleged that since then, she has been publicly ridiculed by senior prosecutors, including a skit lampooning her at the county bar association's annual dinner in January. She further alleged that Danner threatened the county's affirmative action officials with criminal charges for making statements partly supporting her bias claims.

Danner said Bazar's lawsuit "is filled with misrepresentations and outright fabrications" and said it was in retaliation for her transfer. He noted that 18 of the 39 prosecutors in his office are women, and that many, including Canlis, hold senior positions.

Danner said Bazar's allegedly poor performance in the sex-crimes unit has not compromised public safety because those cases have been reassigned. He said Bazar only had difficulty as a prosecutor in the sexual assault assignment and that she is fully capable of handling her current duties.