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Payne Claims Bribes and Coercion at Play Against Him; Alleged Victims Emphatically Deny Being Influenced in Any Form

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Senator Steven Payne Sr. By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

After avoiding calls from Consortium journalists and ignoring our messages for over a month, embattled Senator Steven Payne on Friday in a flurry of communication issued not one, but two public statements addressing the three women who have all accused him of inappropriate, harassing, and abusive behavior.

The Consortium already reported on the first statement the same day in which it came out, noting that his attempts at rebutting the claims did not, in the first instance, directly engage with the reality of the accusations made against him by a young female staffer in his Senate office.

His characterization of the conclusion of the Internal Affairs probe sparked by [Chezni Jones's accusations](#) was also found to be incorrect, after Consortium journalists [sought clarity](#) from VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez.

Payne then issued a second statement on Friday. In the missive, which was, for some reason written in the third person even though it was published on the senator's official letterhead, suggested that people had been attempting to coerce or bribe others to "besmirch his name".

Subsequent to the release of this second statement, the two women who have spoken to the Consortium on the record about their alleged harassment and abuse at the hands of the senator have emphatically denied being in any way influenced in coming forward. Both Chezni Jones nor Steffi Emilien declined to sit for another formal interview, but both have separately told Consortium journalists that they stand by their claims.

In Jones's case, she reminded that she came forward approximately four years ago with her claims about the incident which she says happened somewhere between 2005 and 2006. At the time, she received sympathy and support from her social media network, but media outlets did not pick up on her story until after the now-senator was accused by the second woman — the as-yet unnamed staffer in his office.

Asked about the senator's assertion that her claims are false, Jones simply texted, "I stand by what I said. Plain and simple."

Steffi Emilien has also spoken with the Consortium, rubbishing the suggestion that she may have been induced by fear or money to say that she was sexually assaulted by Payne while she was still a minor. "I actually came looking for you to tell my story," Emilien said. "And I have never gotten any sort of payment for speaking about what I went through."

Senator Payne, in his statement, strongly urged that "if you feel that you were violated, please make an official report, and allow the system to run its course". Consortium journalists understand that at least one of the three women who have levied these serious claims against the at-large Senator is mulling over her legal options with a mind to do just that.