



907 Pine Street  
Suite 500  
Seattle, WA 98101

T 206-682-9552  
F 206-682-9556

[LegalVoice.org](http://LegalVoice.org)

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CONTACT:**

Lisa M. Stone  
Legal Voice  
(425) 306-4761  
[lstone@legalvoice.org](mailto:lstone@legalvoice.org)

Beth Terrell  
Terrell Marshall & Daudt PLLC  
206-816-6603  
[bterrell@tmdlegal.com](mailto:bterrell@tmdlegal.com)

Plaintiff Jane Doe  
May be reached through Ms. Stone

### **Legal Voice Files Lawsuit on Behalf of Former Gonzaga Student** *Former student charges school's response to report of sexual assault by another student violated her rights*

SPOKANE, Wash. – August 31, 2010 – A former student at Gonzaga University sued the school in federal court today. Legal Voice, a women's rights organization, filed the suit alleging that Gonzaga's failure to respond appropriately to Jane Doe's report of sexual assault violated her federal right to equal access to education.

Ms. Doe was a sophomore at Gonzaga when she was raped by a fellow student. After she reported the assault, the school failed to take steps to adequately protect her from further contact with her assailant, so Ms. Doe was forced to seek a court Order of Protection. Rather than enforce the order, the school delayed the university grievance hearing on her claims that her assailant violated Gonzaga's sexual misconduct and ethics codes, refusing to schedule it until she had jumped through procedural hoops.

The school ultimately gave Ms. Doe less than two days' notice before scheduling the hearing on the day before Ms. Doe's departure for a semester abroad. During the grievance proceeding, a hearing panel clearly lacking in appropriate training subjected Ms. Doe to inappropriate questioning, including asking her why she did not fight back during the rape, probing into details about the relative size of the parties' anatomy, and asking questions about Ms. Doe's past sexual conduct. After finding that the assailant did not violate the school's sexual misconduct policy, the school initially refused even to accept Ms. Doe's appeal.

Ms. Doe stated, “I experienced anxiety, fear, and distress after the rape. Rather than assisting me by investigating my complaint, protecting me from my assailant, and conducting a fair hearing, the school did everything it could to silence me.”

“When a school fails to adequately investigate sexual assault complaints and creates roadblocks for students seeking redress, it fails its students. Ms. Doe’s experience, unfortunately, is not unique,” said Lisa M. Stone, Executive Director of Legal Voice. “Educators have an obligation to create a school environment that addresses sexual misconduct, rather than sweeping it under the carpet.”

The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 1 out of 5 college women will be sexually assaulted. Students who are found "responsible" for sexual assaults on campus often face little or no punishment from school judicial systems. In contrast, their victims' lives are frequently turned upside down, according to the Center for Public Integrity.

“When a student is sexually harassed or assaulted on campus, it has a devastating effect on her educational experience as well as her personal life,” said Janet Chung, an attorney at Legal Voice and co-counsel for Ms. Doe. “Schools that act with deliberate indifference to sexual assaults are violating Title IX, which protects students from discrimination based on sex.”

The lawsuit seeks damages to compensate Ms. Doe for the harm she suffered, as well as changes to Gonzaga’s policies and procedures relating to campus sexual harassment and assault. Beth Terrell, of Terrell Marshall & Daudt PLLC, co-counsel for Ms. Doe, stated, “We hope Ms. Doe’s lawsuit will bring about changes that can help survivors of sexual harassment and assault get the support and appropriate investigations that they deserve from their campuses and the educators responsible for them.”

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**Legal Voice** is a nonprofit women’s rights legal organization that pursues justice for all women and girls in the Northwest through ground-breaking litigation, legislative advocacy, and educational tools to help individuals understand their rights.

**Terrell Marshall & Daudt PLLC** is a Seattle law firm that represents plaintiffs in employment and consumer fraud cases, including class actions