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Lopez Says He Will Quit Assembly on Monday

By THOMAS KAPLAN

Facing expulsion from the New York State Legislature over accusations that he sexually harassed several female staff members, a once-powerful assemblyman, Vito J. Lopez, said on Saturday that he would resign on Monday morning.

Mr. Lopez, who had said on Friday that he would seek to remain in office for five weeks before resigning and would then run for the New York City Council, announced his new plan in a one-sentence letter to the Assembly speaker, Sheldon Silver.

"I hereby resign the public office of Member of Assembly from the 53rd Assembly District, Kings County, effective 9 a.m. Monday, May 20, 2013," the letter said, in its entirety.

Mr. Lopez's lawyer, who has been acting as his spokesman, did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday, and it was not clear whether Mr. Lopez, a Brooklyn Democrat, would continue to pursue his bid for the City Council.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, a Democrat who on Friday urged the Assembly to proceed with expelling Mr. Lopez if he did not step down at once, called Mr. Lopez's decision to resign immediately "the best end to this ugly chapter."

"As the governor said, one month was unacceptable, as was one more day," the spokeswoman, Melissa DeRosa, said. She added, "Now we must do everything we can to ensure this type of behavior is never tolerated or allowed to occur again."

Mr. Lopez, who had wielded considerable power in New York and Albany as a senior lawmaker and as the chairman of the Brooklyn Democratic Party, has faced increasing anger since last August when Mr. Silver first revealed that the lawmaker had been accused of sexually harassing female legislative employees.

At the time, Mr. Silver censured Mr. Lopez and stripped him of the privileges of seniority, but the furor intensified after The New York Times reported that Mr. Silver had previously agreed to confidential settlements with other women who had accused Mr. Lopez of harassment. On Wednesday, a lengthy report by the state's Joint Commission on Public Ethics detailed the allegations by several women, prompting calls for Mr. Lopez's expulsion if he did not agree to step down immediately.

The Assembly has not expelled one of its members since the 1920s. On Friday, Mr. Silver, a Manhattan Democrat, circulated a draft resolution that would begin the process of expelling Mr. Lopez; the Assembly had planned to vote on the resolution on Monday.

Mr. Lopez, 71, was first elected to the Assembly in 1984. After resigning, he will continue to receive an annual pension of \$64,634.28, which he began collecting in 2011 through a loophole that allows some lawmakers to receive a legislative salary and a pension simultaneously.

The City Council seat for which Mr. Lopez has said he intends to run includes parts of Bushwick and Williamsburg, in Brooklyn, as well as Ridgewood, Queens, and includes much the territory he has represented in the Assembly.

Mr. Lopez's most formidable opponent would be a fellow Democrat, Antonio Reynoso, the chief of staff for Councilwoman Diana Reyna. Ms. Reyna, a Brooklyn Democrat, holds the seat but cannot seek re-election because of term limits for city officials.

Silver Seen Likely To Overcome Harass-Payout Flap

Long-serving Assembly leader admits mistakes as ethics panel probes \$100G hushed settlement. 09/04/12 | The Jewish Week – (Snippet from an article that appeared last September on this Vito Lopez case.)

As he admits “mistakes were made” in the decision to quietly pay out a six-figure sum to two women claiming harassment by a powerful Brooklyn assemblyman, New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver is riding out the storm while attending the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., this week.