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## Could A Litigation Finance Initiative Capitalize On #MeToo?

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Since early October 2017, when the allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein first surfaced in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, there has been a steady stream of allegations of sexual harassment against high-profile individuals in the media, entertainment and political industries. Now, a Bay Area startup backed by Peter Thiel is looking to take advantage of a potential new wave of sexual harassment lawsuits.

On November 8, 2017, San Francisco-based litigation finance firm Legalist, Inc. launched a new initiative dubbed #MeToo Tales (“M2T”). According to its website, M2T is “a collaboration between Legalist and community organizers working to help victims of sexual harassment get justice.” M2T invites individuals who believe that they have been victims of sexual harassment in the workplace to share their stories confidentially on the initiative’s website or via a toll-free hotline. Legalist offers to pair claimants with its partner law firms and, for “eligible” individuals, to provide “angel” litigation funding of up to \$100,000. Legalist recoups its funding by taking a portion of the proceeds from any successful litigation or settlement.

M2T is an outgrowth of an offer Legalist made last month in the wake of the public accusations against Mr. Weinstein. Back then, Legalist indicated that it would provide funding to anyone with a valid sexual harassment claim against Weinstein. According to Legalist’s management, they were inundated with responses.

Whatever the company’s motives, Legalist’s M2T may be a sign of things to come. Although it began in the entertainment industry, the viral #metoo social media campaign extended far beyond Hollywood, and M2T is not limiting itself to victims in media and entertainment.

Prudent employers in all industries should ensure that they are up-to-date on training their employees on sexual and other forms of unlawful harassment. Although it remains too soon to tell, M2T could be part of a larger uptick in sexual harassment suits.

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Article By

[Philippe A. Lebel](#)

[Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP Labor Sphere](#)

[Labor & Employment](#)

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