

Baby St. John

HOW FAR DID HAROLD DOTY'S MALICE GO? HOW FAR COULD IT HAVE GONE?

A number of USMNEWS.net readers and others have inquired about Karen St. John's high-risk pregnancy, and what, if any, detrimental effects University of Texas-Tyler business school dean Harold Doty's mobbing campaign against her had on her pregnancy. Fortunately, St. John's high-risk pregnancy ended well, as she delivered her sixth child – a baby boy – on 5-July-2011. Based on the information at hand, both mother and son are doing okay in terms of health.

St. John actually addresses the birth of her son in the *amended* court filing that has been the subject of recent updates to USMNEWS.net's *Special Report Series* on Doty's most recent mobbing campaign. That section of the court document is inserted here:

On July 5, 2011, the Plaintiff's child was born prematurely. During her pregnancy, Karen had spent many weekends and evenings in bed trying to slow her contractions, with her husband trying to comfort her. Her physician told her that the stress she was experiencing at work would bathe the baby in stress hormones. Karen was ultimately induced four weeks before the due date and had to have an emergency C-section (her first). Their son was born earlier and weighed less than any of their other five children.

As St. John's Smith County Court filing above points out, her new son was "born prematurely," after St. John "had spent many weekends and evenings in bed trying to slow [the] contractions . . ." that were presumably being caused by the stress associated with being the target of Doty's alleged harassment. St. John's physician confirms that "the stress she was experiencing at work would bathe the baby in stress hormones." Her doctor ultimately had to induce one month before the due date so that the stress on mother and son could be alleviated and dealt with directly. That move required that St. John have her first Caesarian section, and it also resulted in her son being born earlier and weighing less than any of her other five children.

For readers unfamiliar with St. John's story, there are numerous reports available at USMNEWS.net. Still, it [may be](#) beneficial to recap elements of her story that perhaps relate most to the problems associated with a high-risk pregnancy, the situation [she faced during](#) her tumultuous time at UT-Tyler. St. John's legal filing asserts that the [mobbing](#) campaign against her began *after* she notified her supervisors – Doty, and UT-Tyler associate business dean Mary Fischer – about her high-risk pregnancy (see insert below).

ten occasions in Karen's presence. In January, 2010, Karen gave notification to Associate Dean Mary Fischer ("Dr. Fischer") and Harold Doty that she was pregnant and that it was a high-risk pregnancy. With her pregnancy as the major catalyst, Karen then began to experience disparate treatment by Defendant in the terms and conditions of her employment. Such treatment includes the following examples:

Up until this notification, St. John's immediate supervisor – Tammy Cowart – allowed her (St. John) to have a lunch break following her (St. John's) noon class (teaching). That allowance was rescinded in part in early February-2010, just after St. John notified Doty of the pregnancy (see insert below).

Prior to her pregnancy announcement, Karen's then-immediate supervisor, Tammy Cowart ("Cowart"), told her that she would be able to get a lunch hour break every day, in addition to teaching a class at noon, as did other employees in the same situation in other departments. After Karen announced her pregnancy, in the first half of February, 2010, Cowart told Karen that in further discussion with Joe Vorsas ("Vorsas"), Director of Human Resources, they felt that allowing an employee to have a lunch break in addition to teaching during the day was an optional decision for each department and they chose to rescind her lunch break on the days that she taught. Nonetheless, because Karen explained the need to eat each meal during pregnancy to avoid becoming sick, Cowart allowed her thirty minutes after her class to pick up something to eat on the way back to the office. At the end of their conversation, Cowart told Karen, "But the good news is that you are not in trouble for all the lunches you have already taken." However, at the beginning of March, Karen was called into Tammy Cowart's office and told that she would no longer be allowed the thirty minutes after her class to get something to eat. After Karen explained again that she had to eat because of her pregnancy, Cowart allowed her 10 minutes before and after class. None of these stringent restrictions were placed on Karen until she became pregnant. By refusing to allow Karen appropriate time for lunch on the days she taught classes, Defendant also prevented her from attending the monthly staff luncheons that other employees were permitted to attend.

As the insert above indicates, the decision to rescind St. John's lunch break was supported at the highest levels of UT-Tyler's administration when UT-Tyler human resources director Joe Vorsas informed UT-Tyler b-school officials that giving someone a lunch break – even a woman with a high-risk pregnancy – was simply optional. Still, Cowart used the newly-won option to allow St. John a few minutes after class for lunch, but only if having lunch was connected to her walk back to the advisement offices in the b-school. Shortly thereafter, however, Cowart trimmed St. John's lunch privilege to 10 minutes on either side of her noon class.



Fischer Cowart Vorsas

Doty apparently tired of hearing reports that his wish to have St. John's lunch privilege voided was not being made effective. He called a meeting with St. John and Cowart to discuss these and other issues.

St. John describes that meeting as a “45 minute [tongue lashing](#)” administered to her by Doty, who ultimately let her know, “. . . [and] in no uncertain terms . . .,” that she was not to use any of her workday to have lunch, even though he knew that she was dealing with a high-risk pregnancy (see below).

In mid-March, 2010, Defendant issued Karen an unjust and unfair written warning, signed by Cowart but not written by her. This was the first written disciplinary action Karen had ever received from UT Tyler. Dean Doty called Karen into his office and immediately told her that he would fire her for no reason as he didn't need a reason, and Karen began crying. The warning cited no less than five separate reasons for the warning, yet Dean Doty denied Karen the opportunity to refute such allegations, in direct violation of UT Tyler's Handbook of Operating Procedures (“Handbook”). Instead, Dean Doty administered a 45 minute tongue lashing to Karen. Dean Doty further told her in no uncertain terms that she must restrict the time devoted to teaching her class to her lunch period only. He revoked permission for Karen to take even ten minutes before or after class; she had to go straight there and come straight back to the office. He and Cowart chastised Karen for taking too long in returning from her class to the office and she attempted to explain that as her pregnancy progresses, she was physically unable to walk as fast. She also again reiterated the need to get some lunch so that she would not become sick, but they did not care about these concerns. Dean Doty reaffirmed that she would not be allowed a lunch period of any length. When they were finished verbally attacking her, Dean Doty asked Karen if she had anything to say but she could not talk for crying. He told her she had to sign the disciplinary action.

Cowart also got in on the tongue-lashing of St. John, chastising St. John “. . . for taking too long in returning from her [noon] class to the [advising] office . . .” After what St. John characterizes as a verbal attack on her, she “. . . could not talk for crying.”

It is highly unlikely that one could find a directive in a medical journal, on a medical website, or from a physician's own lips indicating that women dealing with high-risk pregnancies should not eat lunch. Yet, that is the outcome that Doty, Cowart and Fischer were promoting vis-à-vis St. John's high-risk pregnancy (and one that does not surprise USMNEWS.net sources who remind us that it is Doty [who likes to refer to women as](#) “chicks” and “broad”). Finally, this is also perhaps the type of logic that a USMNEWS.net reader [used in describing](#) how, in denying St. John time for lunch, Doty and the others may have been up to something even more sinister. Back in September-2011 that reader pointed out that “[o]ne could argue that Doty . . . and anyone else who participated in this mess were trying to cause St. John to have a miscarriage.”