

COURTS

Strauss sexual abuse survivors can seek damages beyond tuition costs, judge rules



Sheridan Hendrix

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Plaintiffs in the cases related to [sexual abuse by former Ohio State University doctor Richard Strauss](#) can pursue a slate of economic damages beyond tuition costs, according to a federal judge's order.

In an order filed April 28 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio in Columbus, Judge Michael Watson clarified what kind of compensatory damages plaintiffs would be eligible to receive.

Plaintiffs asked the court to clarify if they could receive damages for cost educational opportunities and benefits, lost earnings and earning capacity, physical injuries and discrimination. Ohio State asked the court to find that that any prevailing plaintiffs would "be limited to recovering the cost of tuition," according to the filing.

Watson rejected Ohio State's ask to limit damages to tuition-related losses. Rather, he granted that the plaintiffs are "not categorically prohibited" from seeking damages for lost educational opportunities, lost earnings and earning capacity, and the costs of treating physical injuries resulting from the abuse.

Additionally, Watson prohibited from plaintiffs recovering separate damages for "discrimination." He also ruled that any damages for physical injuries "will not

include damages for physical violation, loss of bodily integrity, or any other label that is a repackaging of emotional distress damages."

"This decision rejects the University's attempt to artificially limit the scope of harm suffered by survivors," Joseph Sauder, an attorney with Sauder Schelkopf, and Sarah Bradshaw, an attorney with Sharp Law LLP, said in a statement. "The Court confirmed that survivors can seek accountability for the lasting educational, professional and physical impacts of what happened to them."

The case will proceed using bellwether trials, where juries will evaluate damages based on evidence of each individual plaintiff's losses.

Who is Richard Strauss?

Strauss was hired by Ohio State in September 1978 as an assistant professor in the College of Medicine. Investigators found that [university officials began receiving complaints and had knowledge of Strauss' misconduct](#) as early as 1979, months after he arrived.

[Strauss' abuse went on for years](#) and ranged from subtle acts under the pretext of medical purpose to more-overt actions, survivors said. He fondled patients' genitals and conducted genital or rectal exams even when they weren't medically necessary, survivors said.

An independent investigative report released by Ohio State University in May 2019 said Strauss sexually abused at least 177 students throughout his 20-year tenure as an athletics and student health doctor at the school.

Strauss died by suicide in 2005, more than a decade before Ohio State would begin publicly investigating his abuses.

Where do the Strauss cases stand?

An ongoing lawsuit filed by survivors against Ohio State has picked up speed in the last year [after the university tried to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court](#).

Lawyers representing Strauss survivors deposed several high-profile individuals in 2025, including Ohio State football legend [Archie Griffin](#) and [Rep. Jim Jordan](#), an Urbana Republican who previously served as an Ohio State assistant wrestling coach from 1986 to 1994.

Earlier this year, a federal court judge ordered that [Les Wexner](#), the retail mogul and former university trustee, and former two-time university president [E. Gordon Gee](#) must sit for depositions in the Strauss case.

Ohio State reached settlements with 13 more Strauss survivors on April 15. The settlement agreement totaled \$1.8 million, an average of more than \$138,000 per survivor. Ohio State has reached settlements with more than half of outstanding plaintiffs, paying out more than \$61 million to 317 survivors since March 2020.

The remaining Strauss survivors involved in the legal case against Ohio State are scheduled to go to trial later this year.

Higher education reporter Sheridan Hendrix can be reached at shendrix@dispatch.com and on Signal at [@sheridan.120](#). You can follow her on Instagram at [@sheridanwrites](#).