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Rape suit against ex-teacher set

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Written by **TIMOTHY O'CONNOR**

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WHITE PLAINS — Opening arguments are scheduled today in the federal lawsuit of a Putnam Valley woman who says a teacher drugged and sexually assaulted her in a classroom when she was a seventh-grader.

Her lawsuit charges that school officials had not acted on prior accusations of sexual misconduct against the teacher.

Laura Bliss said she was raped by social studies teacher Dennis Tave in February 2001. Bliss was 12 years old at the time.

Tave was never charged in the case and continues to deny any wrongdoing.

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Bliss, now 23, says Tave continued to make sexual advances toward her for two years after the alleged rape.

The alleged rape was reported to authorities by Bliss's therapist in May 2003 after Bliss told her about the incident. In July 2003, the sheriff's office closed its investigation "pending leads" without filing any charges, police documents say.

Tave, 65, resigned from the Putnam Valley Central School District in August 2003.

In the lawsuit, which seeks \$17 million, Bliss said the district and Putnam Valley Middle School principal Edward J. Hallisey knew of — or should have known of — earlier incidents of inappropriate sexual conduct by Tave at the school.



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The lawsuit charges that Bliss, who was in Tave's classroom after school to make up work she missed, passed out after drinking something Tave gave her.

She awoke to find herself on the floor with her clothes pulled down and Tave standing over her fixing his clothes and telling her to get out of the classroom.

Tave has denied the charges, saying in court papers, that a decade after the alleged incident no state or local agency has substantiated the allegations against him.

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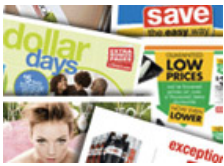
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