



# Opinion Conservatives cheer Eric Holder's exit: Why he was such a punching bag



Atty. Gen. Eric H. Holder Jr., an original member of President Obama's Cabinet, is resigning. (Mark Wilson / Getty Images)

By **ALEXANDRA LE TELLIER**

SEPTEMBER 25, 2014, 12:46 PM

**A**tt. Gen. Eric. H. Holder Jr. has finally given conservatives a reason to cheer. He's stepping down from his post as head of the Justice Department.

"Good riddance," wrote **W. James Antle III** in response to the news, saying, "The Holder Justice Department earned a reputation for being aggressive in the enforcement of laws it liked and [...] was

far quicker than his boss, the first African American president, to racialize national controversies.”

Commenting on Fox News (as reported by [the Daily Caller](#)), conservative Jonah Goldberg also weighed in: “He’s basically been a political fixer, a firewall for the president of the United States. A stonewaller. [...] If John Ashcroft had behaved half as politicized as Eric Holder has, the New York Times would be sparking riots.”

In June 2012, Los Angeles Times editorial board member Michael McGough wrote about [why Holder was such a punching bag](#) for critics. His argument, reposted in full:

*Besieged Attorney General Eric Holder (“Besieged” is almost part of his official title these days) told the Senate Judiciary Committee today that he’s not sure whether he would remain in his post in a second Obama administration. If he did leave, it would deprive conservatives of a favorite punching bag.*

*Holder has antagonized the right on a litany of subjects, from Fast and Furious to the New Black Panther Party to hobnobbing with Al Sharpton to his lecture about how Americans are cowards in discussing race. Unhinged conservative Internet commenters constantly complain about Holder’s descriptions of African-Americans as “my people” and The Wall Street Journal recently ran an over-the-top editorial accusing Holder of pursuing a political “racial incitement strategy.”*

*Yet some of Holder’s actions also give pause to those of us who prefer an attorney general who keeps a lower political profile.*

*Maybe because I cut my teeth as a journalist in the Watergate era, my own ideal AG was Ed Levi, the former University of Chicago president recruited by Gerald Ford to restore the Justice Department’s reputation after that scandal. Others, I know, lean to the Bobby Kennedy model of an attorney general who is deeply invested in the political agenda of the president (even if he’s not related to him). The problem with the AG-as-confidant approach is that it also describes John Mitchell, Ed Meese and Alberto Gonzales.*

*Holder has been somewhere in the middle. He’s no John Mitchell, and on some issues -- notably terrorism trials -- he admirably has taken positions that caused the administration political grief. On the other hand, like Bobby Kennedy (though to a lesser extent), Holder was active in the campaign of the president who appointed him. He also has used the AG’s office as a bully pulpit for homilies about not only race relations but the right to vote and the administration’s opposition to measures that allegedly suppress turnout.*

One of Holder's audiences was **an event sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the Conference of National Black Churches** that featured panels on the state of voting rights, protecting a church's tax exempt status and energizing constituents and congregants to vote. Although Holder's speech was unimpeachable, his appearance in that venue made it easy for Republicans to convict him of guilt by association with groups whose preference in the presidential election isn't hard to guess.

The U.S. attorney general is an awkward hybrid: part supposedly apolitical lawyer, part member of the Cabinet. The alternatives to presidential appointment of the AG are worse: an elected AG (a disaster at the state level) or a Civil Service "director of public prosecutions." But if he gets a second term Obama could save himself, and Holder, some grief by looking for a lawyer who would be less of a lightning rod.

That's good advice as **the conversation turns** to who will replace Holder.

**Follow Alexandra Le Tellier on Twitter @alexletellier**

Copyright © 2014, Los Angeles Times

---

## FROM AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

**Economist: "U.S. Headed For Crisis Worse Than 2008"**

Money Morning

**Fitmob Workout Craze Sweeps Bay Area**

Patch

**Most Outrageous Gowns at the Met Gala**

The Cut

**You NEED To See These 20 Pictures of Kobe Bryant With Wife Vanessa Bryant Through the Years**

Rant Sports

**Little Known Way To Pay Down Your Mortgage**

LendingTree

**Inside Tom Brady And Gisele's New Luxurious Mansion (Photos)**

LonnyMag

**The Subway Gangs of Mexico City**

VICE

**This Cartoon is Definitely Not for Kids**

Netflix

---