

---

## Murphy: Cleaning Up the Attorney General's Office is a Full Time Job

In the wake of Saturday's news that the Justice Department's third-in-command, acting associate attorney general William W. Mercer, has joined the growing list of high level Justice Department officials to resign, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) today called on the department to designate the Chief of Staff position as a full time role.

Contact: Kristen Bossi  
(202) 225-4476

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In the wake of Saturday's news that the Justice Department's third-in-command, acting associate attorney general William W. Mercer, has joined the growing list of high level Justice Department officials to resign, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) today called on the department to designate the Chief of Staff position as a full time role. For the past two months, Attorney General Gonzales' interim Chief of Staff, Kevin O'Connor, has been splitting his time serving in Washington, D.C., and as U.S. Attorney in Connecticut. Meanwhile, Attorney General Gonzales continues to defend improper firing practices conducted under his leadership at the Justice Department.

The agency is facing a staffing crisis - a quarter of all federal prosecutors are currently serving on an interim or acting basis. And since March, six high-level Justice Department officials have resigned, including two who announced their departures in the last ten days.

"The U.S. Justice Department is in complete disarray. Attorney General Gonzales's support in Congress and within his own agency has completely eroded. I applaud Mr. O'Connor for his courage in taking on the task of cleaning up the mess that Attorney General Gonzales has created. But make no mistake, cleaning up the Attorney General's office is a full time job. If Mr. O'Connor is fulfilling his duties in Connecticut, he cannot be giving the proper attention to fixing the Attorney General's office. Mr. O'Connor is undoubtedly an incredibly capable prosecutor, but he cannot continue to do both critical jobs at once. The chief of staff position needs to be full time, and both the Attorney General and Mr. O'Connor should recognize that fact," said Murphy.

For months, the Justice Department has been embroiled in controversy, as Attorney General Gonzales and many of his top aides have been involved in a potential cover up of firing federal prosecutors based on politics, not job performance. Just last week, a House Judiciary Committee subcommittee heard testimony from Deputy Attorney General Paul J. McNulty, who has been accused of providing inaccurate testimony to Congress about the firing of U.S. attorneys and of seeking to obscure the White House's role in the firings. Also last week the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on political hiring and firing in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

"It's clear that the difficulties the Justice Department is facing have placed great strains on the staff. But the Department's mission must be carried out, and its staff must have strong, ethical leadership to repair the damage that has been done by Attorney General Gonzales. Kevin O'Connor could just be the man for the job, but the troubled and beleaguered staff he is leading deserves full time attention," said Murphy.

# # #