

# Schneiderman's Resignation Contributes to Turmoil and Speculation About His Successor

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The resignation of Eric T. Schneiderman, New York's attorney general and a central figure in the liberal resistance to President Trump, after allegations that he had [physically abused multiple women](#) set off an immediate storm of speculation in New York about his potential successor, and raised questions nationwide about the fate of his legal challenges to the Trump administration.

Even before Mr. Schneiderman announced his resignation late Monday evening, just hours after The New Yorker [first published](#) the accusations, New York's political circles were already abuzz with talk of who would replace him. He had been the heavy favorite to win a third term in November.

Until the election, the vacancy will be filled by the State Assembly and State Senate, which under New York's Constitution make the choice by joint ballot. That effectively places the decision in the hands of the Assembly, which comprises an overwhelming majority of the state's legislators and is dominated by Democrats

"The effective choice is with the Speaker," said Gerald Benjamin, a political science

professor at SUNY-New Paltz, referring to Carl E. Heastie, the leader of the Assembly Democrats.

Names of potential successors proliferated quickly and included Kathleen Rice, a United States representative from Long Island who unsuccessfully challenged Mr. Schneiderman in the 2010 Democratic primary; Preet Bharara, the former United States attorney from Manhattan; Alphonso David, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's chief counsel; Michael Gianaris, a state senator from Queens and chief political strategist for the Democratic conference; Zephyr Teachout, a Fordham Law School professor who ran for governor in 2014; Helene Weinstein, who chairs the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee; and Benjamin Lawsky, formerly the state's top financial regulator.

None have publicly expressed interest, and it is unclear whether they would also seek to run in the general election in November.

The Assembly Democrats were scheduled to meet on Tuesday morning to discuss the choice.

New York's solicitor general, Barbara D. Underwood, will lead the office in the meantime, according to Amy Spitalnick, a spokeswoman for the attorney general's office. Ms. Underwood, a graduate of Harvard and Georgetown, has argued 20 cases before the Supreme Court and served as a clerk for former Justice Thurgood Marshall.

According to *The New Yorker*, Mr. Schneiderman slapped, choked or spat on at least four women with whom he had been romantically involved, two of whom spoke on the record. The horrific accusations included alcohol-fueled rages, racist remarks, drug abuse and threats — including to kill the women or use his power as the state's top law enforcement officer against them if they defied him.

Politicians and pundits in both parties joined in swift and unsparing condemnation of Mr. Schneiderman. But the conversation quickly turned partisan, given Mr. Schneiderman's meteoric rise as a relentless and outspoken legal foe of Mr. Trump who had [sued the federal administration more than 100 times](#) over policies ranging from immigration to taxation.

Prominent Republicans nationwide reveled in the news. Donald Trump Jr. mockingly shared several old tweets from the attorney general, in which he had denounced the president and expressed solidarity with victims of sexual assault; "This didn't age well," he [wrote](#). Kellyanne Conway, the president's counselor, wrote in a tweet that Mr. Schneiderman had been "[drunk with power](#)." By early Tuesday, the president had not commented on Mr. Schneiderman's resignation.

Mr. Schneiderman's fellow Democrats had also called on him to step aside, with Mr. Cuomo, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Mr. Heastie saying the attorney general was incapable of continuing in his office.

And people in [both parties](#) were quick to point out that some right-wing pundits who blasted the attorney general were also staunch defenders of President Trump, who has himself been accused of a slew of sexual abuse.

While Mr. Schneiderman's resignation signals the probable end of a career that many had seen as gaining quick national prominence, the legal fallout is most likely only beginning.

A spokesman for Cyrus R. Vance Jr., the Manhattan district attorney, said Mr. Vance's office had opened an investigation into the allegations in the New Yorker article. Mr. Schneiderman had, at the direction of Mr. Cuomo, himself [been probing](#) Mr. Vance's office over questions about its handling of groping allegations against the film mogul Harvey Weinstein in 2015. A spokeswoman for the attorney general's office did not immediately comment on whether that review would continue.

Separately, Mr. Cuomo also said on Monday that he would direct an "appropriate New York district attorney" to investigate the allegations. An administration official said Monday that the governor's office wanted to avoid any conflict of interest and ensure the proper jurisdiction, given the attorney general's review of Mr. Vance and the fact that some of the alleged abuse occurred on Long Island.

Mr. Schneiderman had been in contact with a criminal defense lawyer late Monday afternoon to advise him on his response to The New Yorker, according to two people with knowledge of the matter. Later, an associate of Mr. Schneiderman was looking for a lawyer to represent him in connection with the criminal investigation, several other people with knowledge of the matter said.

Mr. Schneiderman has denied wrongdoing, describing the acts as part of consensual relationships.

Several women's groups that had previously supported Mr. Schneiderman — he was known for being an [outspoken advocate for women's advancement](#), especially reproductive rights — expressed shock and sorrow. The National Institute for Reproductive Health, which had honored the attorney general at a May 1 luncheon, said in a statement that it was "appalled and horrified." (By Tuesday, the group had removed Mr. Schneiderman from its list of honorees.) Sonia Ossorio, president of New York's arm of the National Organization for Women, which endorsed Mr. Schneiderman in his 2010 and 2014 campaigns, said she was "in shock."

"I'm just beside myself right now," she said.

And political observers said the news would further erode public trust in Albany, which has been roiled repeatedly by corruption trials, sexual harassment scandals and other ethics controversies.

Douglas Muzzio, a political science professor at Baruch College, said the allegations were "another blow" to our "trust in government officials and in the institutions of government itself."

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