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## The Rollins fallout begins

By **LISA KASHINSKY** | 05/17/2023 07:09 AM EDT

*With help from Josh Gerstein*

**ROLLINS REPORT** — Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins' plan to step down amid two federal ethics probes represents a stunning fall for the rapidly ascending

progressive prosecutor and creates an embarrassing situation for the Democrats who helped get her the job.

**Rollins plans to submit her letter of resignation to President Joe Biden by close of business Friday**, her attorney said. The move comes after the Department of Justice wrapped a monthslong investigation into her appearance at a Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Andover last summer and other potential ethics issues. The Associated Press first reported Rollins' pending departure.

**“She is optimistic that the important work she started will continue but understands that her presence has become a distraction,”** Rollins' attorney, former Justice Department Inspector General Michael Bromwich, said in a statement. “The work of the office and the Department of Justice is far too important to be overshadowed by anything else.”

**Still, the situation presents a political problem for top Democrats** who will have to navigate the media storm over Rollins' departure and the fallout of the twin federal investigations into her conduct. Rollins is also being scrutinized by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, which looks into, among other things, alleged violations of the

Hatch Act that limits the political activities of certain government employees. By announcing her departure yesterday, Rollins appears to be trying to get ahead of the findings of at least one of those probes becoming public.

**Rollins' resignation caps a tumultuous tenure.** Her confirmation was unusually contentious, held up for weeks by Republicans who hammered her as soft on crime over her decline-to-prosecute list of 15 low-level offenses. Vice President Kamala Harris twice had to cast tie-breaking votes to move Rollins' nomination along and make her the first Black woman to serve as U.S. attorney in the state.

**Her successor could face a similar slog, but for different reasons.** Sen. Dianne Feinstein's (D-Calif.) prolonged absence after a shingles diagnosis delayed some of Biden's judicial nominees getting through the chamber. And not all of them are coming unstuck now that she's back in a limited capacity.

**Biden has some time to figure this out.** In the event of a vacancy, the U.S. attorney job typically falls to the first assistant, which in this case is Joshua Levy. Biden could try to rush through a permanent replacement before the end of his first term, but that would be tough given the state of the

Senate. Or he could punt on nominating someone until after the election.

**But in the immediate term, Rollins is a blemish** on both Biden’s Justice Department and for the senators, Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, who pushed to get her the gig.

**Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.)** — who fought Rollins’ confirmation and has asked federal officials to investigate her for possibly violating the Hatch Act and for allegedly removing documents from her office — is already seizing on her resignation to rail against the broader DOJ. The state GOP piled on, saying Biden “failed with the Rollins appointment.”

**While Rollins is likely the only one who will sustain lasting political damage**, her departure and the circumstances surrounding it aren’t a shining moment for her supporters, either.

**Neither Warren nor Markey had much to say about it last night.** “Rachael Rollins has for years dedicated herself to the people of Massachusetts and equal justice under the law,” they said in a brief joint statement. “We will respect her decision.”

## **GOOD WEDNESDAY MORNING, MASSACHUSETTS.**

Read what Rollins told staff in her farewell memo and what her departure means for the federal investigation into the Worcester Police Department.

**TODAY** — Gov. **Maura Healey**, Lt. Gov. **Kim Driscoll** and Boston Mayor **Michelle Wu** speak at an AANHPI Heritage Month event at 11:30 a.m. at the State House. **Healey** speaks at an AFL-CIO summit at 4 p.m. at the IBEW Local 103 hall. **Wu** attends an East Boston coffee hour at 9:30 a.m. and speaks the Nubian Markets grand opening at 12:30 p.m. and an Emerald Necklace Conservancy event at 1:15 p.m.

*Tips? Scoops? Email me: [lkashinsky@politico.com](mailto:lkashinsky@politico.com).*

## **DATELINE BEACON HILL**

— **SHOW OF SUPPORT:** Gov. **Maura Healey** told WBUR's "Radio Boston" that the Senate's budget proposal to offer in-state college tuition rates to undocumented immigrants who've lived in Massachusetts for at least three years and obtained a high school degree or equivalent is "absolutely essential and a no-brainer."

— "Some housing activists disappointed with Healey's choice for housing secretary," by Sam

**Turken, GBH News:** “In a statement Monday announcing [Ed] Augustus’ appointment as leader of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, [Gov. Maura Healey] credited him with overseeing the development of various new housing complexes while he was Worcester’s city manager from 2014 to 2022. ... But housing activists in Worcester argue that’s misleading, noting the vast majority of those new apartments have been too expensive for low- to moderate-income renters. They add that housing prices in Worcester soared and homelessness rose to record highs while Augustus ran the city.”

— **“Bill to expand wine, beer licenses opposed by ‘packies’,”** by **Christian M. Wade, Eagle-Tribune:**

“The state’s package store industry is digging in for another fight against ‘Big Alcohol’ over efforts on Beacon Hill to deregulate the tightly controlled alcoholic beverages market.”

— **“State lawmakers hear testimony supporting several anti-workplace violence bills,”** by **Kinga Borondy, Telegram & Gazette:**

“Youth sports officials, nurses, transit operators [testified] before [state] legislators

that they need protections against attacks from the public while just trying to do their jobs.”

— **“New Mass. DPH director wants to bolster beleaguered department, rebuild trust in public health,”** by Kay Lazar, Boston Globe.

— **“Mass. sports bets topped \$580M in April,”** by Christian M. Wade, Eagle-Tribune.

## THE RACE FOR CITY HALL

— **“Pangallo to become Salem’s next mayor,”** by Dustin Luca, Salem News: “Dominick Pangallo, longtime chief of staff to Salem’s 50th mayor Kim Driscoll, took 52.4% of the vote in Tuesday’s special mayoral election, beating out former mayor Neil Harrington in unofficial results.”

— **FIRST IN PLAYBOOK:** House Ways and Means Chair **Aaron Michlewitz** has endorsed **Sharon Durkan** in the special Boston City Council District 8 election, per her campaign.

## DAY IN COURT

— **“SJC punts on individual contributions to super PACs,”** by Jennifer Smith, Commonwealth

**Magazine:** “The Supreme Judicial Court considered an initiative petition proposed in 2022 that would place a \$5,000-per-year cap on contributions from individuals to independent expenditure PACs, also known as super PACs. Then-Attorney General Maura Healey decided in September not to certify the measure for the ballot, concluding it likely violated federal and state free speech protections. In a brisk 17-page decision published Tuesday, Justice Scott L. Kafker wrote that the ballot proponents’ failure to collect signatures during the 2022 cycle while the high court considered the case means the issue is no longer a live one.”

**The decision now kicks the issue to the Legislature,** where the joint election laws committee is set to consider a bill filed by state Rep. **Michael Day** that would put that same cap on individual contributions. A hybrid hearing starts at 10 a.m.

## **PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES**

— **“MBTA bus, subway operators want more penalties for assaults on transit workers,”** by **Chris Van Buskirk, Boston Herald:** “[A] bill from state Rep. Joseph [McGonagle] ... would impose an up to two-and-a-half year prison sentence and \$5,000 fine for assault and



battery upon a public transit worker who is engaged in their work.”

— **“Commuter rail ridership, once dismal, continues to grow,”** by Bruce Mohl, **CommonWealth Magazine**: “In October 2022, ridership reached 78 percent of pre-pandemic levels (pre-pandemic is defined as 119,354 average weekday passengers), dipped somewhat over the holidays, and then hit 79 percent in April of this year.”

#### FROM THE DELEGATION

— **“Senator Warren calls for insider-trading investigation of former SVB CEO,”** by Jennifer Schongerger, Yahoo Finance.

— **WATCH: “Markey announces bill to add 4 seats to the Supreme Court,”** by POLITICO.

#### FROM THE 413

— **“Recall of Easthampton schools chair advances after ‘ladies’ controversy,”** by Luis Fieldman, **MassLive**: “Easthampton residents frustrated by a superintendent search gone awry are seeking a recall election for the chair of the city’s School Committee. On

Monday, organizers submitted a petition with 400 signatures after a weeks-long effort. The next step will require more than three times as many signatures.”

— **“Probe finds Hampshire County jail official violated state law in sheriff primary election,”** by

**James Pentland, Daily Hampshire Gazette:** “In a heavily redacted report that Sheriff Patrick Cahillane posted Thursday to the Hampshire County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page, consultant Daniel Bennett, of Comprehensive Investigations and Consulting LLC, found that Barbara Marean used her official position in an attempt to intimidate a jail employee who supported one of Cahillane’s challengers and removed and tampered with campaign signs in someone else’s yard.”

— **“Embattled Amherst school leader doesn’t want to be superintendent,”** by **Dave Eisenstadter,**

**MassLive:** “One of the school officials at the center of a controversy involving the treatment of transgender students at the Amherst Regional Middle School told district leaders she would not accept an appointment to the district’s top job, she said Tuesday.”

— **“State auditor will look at UMass jobs transfer to private foundation,”** by **Scott Merzbach, Daily**

## **Hampshire Gazette.**

— **“Agawam Mayor William Sapelli says he will not seek reelection,”** by Aprell May Munford, Springfield Republican.

## **THE LOCAL ANGLE**

— **“Holliston teachers’ union vote no confidence in superintendent,”** by Adria Watson, Boston Globe: “The union representing Holliston educators overwhelmingly voted no confidence in the school district’s Superintendent Susan Kustka, citing issues with her leadership around communicating, retaining staff, and equity concerns.”

— **“After exhausting all other options’ Brockton lays off 130 teachers as enrollment plummets,”** by Christopher Butler, Brockton Enterprise: “Brockton Public Schools Superintendent Mike Thomas announced Monday that 130 certified staff members will be laid off as the district faces an \$18 million budget deficit. ‘Since the start of the pandemic, the district’s enrollment dropped by nearly 1,350 students,’ Thomas said in the statement.”

— **IN MEMORIAM: “Associated Press photographer Elise Amendola, who documented**

**decades of sports and news, dies at 70,” by Caleb Jones, The Associated Press.**

## **HEARD ‘ROUND THE BUBBLAH**

**WELCOME TO THE WORLD** — Rep. **Jake**

**Auchincloss** and his wife, **Michelle**, welcomed their third child, **Audrey**, on Friday evening. Mom, newborn and family are all doing well. ***Tweet.***

**TRANSITIONS** — **Nahid Bhadelia** has left the White House, where she was senior policy adviser for the White House Covid-19 response team. She has returned to Boston University, where she leads the Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Policy & Research.

— **Stephanie Knapp** is now director of external affairs at the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. She previously was senior communications manager at the Barbara Lee Family Foundation.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY** — to **Ralph Neas**. Happy belated to former Boston Acting Mayor **Kim Janey** and to **Kayla Scire**, who celebrated Tuesday, and to **Tara Jacobs**, who celebrated Monday.

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