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Obama says Lynch will carry on equal justice

By Nedra Pickler

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama introduced his choice for attorney general Saturday as an accomplished prosecutor from New York City who will carry on a "fierce commitment to equal justice."

Obama argued at a White House ceremony that it's "pretty hard to be more qualified" for the job of attorney general than Brooklyn federal prosecutor Loretta Lynch.

"Loretta might be the only lawyer in America who battles mobsters and drug lords and terrorists, and still has the reputation for being a charming people person," Obama said to laughter from those who packed the Roosevelt Room for the announcement.

The 55-year-old Lynch would be the first African-American woman to serve as attorney general. She would replace outgoing Attorney General Eric Holder, who also was at Saturday's announcement and was the first black head of the Justice Department.

Lynch said she was humbled and thrilled at the prospect of leading "the only Cabinet department named for an ideal."

"If I have the honor of being confirmed by the Senate, I will wake up every morning with the protection of the American people as my first thought," she said. "And I will work every day to safeguard our citizens, our liberties, our rights, and this great nation which has given so much to me and my family."

Republicans have promised tough scrutiny of Obama's pick after years of battles with Holder, who is close to Lynch and appointed her to his chair of a committee that advises him on policy. Holder has been an unflinching champion of civil rights in enforcing the nation's laws and his successor will be left to grapple with several prominent civil rights issues that have been elevated on his watch.

White House officials said they are leaving it up to Senate leaders to work out the timeline for her confirmation, with Obama calling for approval "without delay." But with Democrats facing a long list of priorities before year's end brings a shift to Republican control, it's likely she won't get a vote until next year.

Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Democrat and the outgoing chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he will consult about scheduling confirmation hearings with Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Republican who will take over in January. "She will appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee in a public hearing after we have had time to review her record," he said in a statement.

Lynch was chosen in large part because the White House sees her as likely to win approval from the Senate after Republicans won the majority in Tuesday's midterm election. Grassley's office said Obama called him Friday night to tell him Lynch would be the nominee and the White House followed up to schedule a time for Grassley to speak with Lynch.

Lynch is the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, which covers Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and Long Island, a position she also held under President Bill Clinton.

"Loretta doesn't look to make headlines, she looks to make a difference," Obama said, offering an explanation why she's largely unknown in Washington outside legal circles. "She's not about splash, she is about substance."



President Barack Obama welcomes the Jackie Robinson West All Stars to the Oval Office, Nov. 6, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza) - Earlier this afternoon, the Jackie Robinson West All Stars -- the U.S. champions in this year's Little League World Series -- stopped by the White House for a visit with the President and the First Lady. Hailing mainly from the South Side of Chicago, Jackie Robinson West captured the world's attention this summer on their extraordinary run through the Little League World Series. Along with being the first Chicago-area team to make it to the Little League World Series in 31 years, Jackie Robinson West also made history as the first all-black team to win the U.S. title.

Jeff Thelusme visits a friend's grave on Veterans Day at the South Florida National cemetery in Lake Worth, Fla., Tues. Nov. 11. The served in Afghanistan together. His friend, suffering from PTSD died in a drowning after coming home. (AP Photo/ J. Pat Carter)



Former UNC football player files lawsuit

By Tom Foreman Jr.

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Former University of North Carolina football player Michael McAdoo has filed a lawsuit against the school, saying it failed to provide him and other athletes a quality education by guiding them toward sham classes.

Online court records say a lawsuit seeking class action status was filed this week in U.S. District Court in Charlotte.

McAdoo's lawsuit says that he was guaranteed a good education while being recruited by football coaches, but was ultimately guided to consider three options, one of which was African-American Studies - the curriculum that formed the basis for the long-running academic scandal.

"We're not out to vilify UNC. We're trying to restore the student-athlete principle that UNC's really been for so long in the forefront of," said Jeremi Duru, a Washington, D.C., attorney representing McAdoo who also teaches law at American University.

Rick White, UNC Associate Vice Chancellor for Communications and Public Affairs, said the school became aware of the lawsuit on Nov. 7 and will reserve comment until it has reviewed the claims.

McAdoo, who played football at UNC from 2008 through 2010, was ruled permanently ineligible in 2010 for academic violations connected to a tutor providing improper assistance on a research paper for a class in the formerly named African and Afro-American Studies department.

The lawsuit comes weeks after a report detailing the academic and athletic scandal at UNC revealed that more than 3,100 athletes and everyday students took no-show classes in the formerly named African and Afro-American Studies department for nearly two decades ending in 2011.

The report by former U.S. Justice Department official Kenneth Wainstein said those classes resulted in artificially high grades while faculty and university administrators either missed red flags or looked the other way. The report also said almost half the students enrolled in the bogus classes were athletes, more than 10 times their proportion in the overall student population. Athletics staffers steered players to the classes when they struggled to meet the grades required to continue competing.

In the lawsuit, McAdoo said UNC coaches and other representatives "enticed these football student-athletes to sign the agreements with promises of a legitimate UNC education . . ."

"Instead, UNC systematically funneled its football student-athletes into a 'shadow curriculum' of bogus courses which never met and which were designed for the sole purpose of providing enrollees high grades," the lawsuit said. It also said the curriculum featured hundreds of courses which never met and never involved a professor and that hundreds of football student-athletes were steered to the courses.

Also, the lawsuit says UNC has reaped "substantial profits" from football players, but has not provided them with an education in return, thus breaching its contract with McAdoo and other student-athletes in violation of North Carolina law. The lawsuit also accuses the school of fraud by promising "a legitimate education" if McAdoo and others enrolled at UNC as football student-athletes.

Sports Writer Aaron Beard contributed to this report from Raleigh.



President Barack Obama announces his nominee for Attorney General, Loretta E. Lynch, to succeed Eric Holder, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

UNC to face more scrutiny from accrediting agency

RALEIGH (AP) - The University of North Carolina faces more scrutiny by an accrediting agency after details emerged on an academic scandal.

The News & Observer of Raleigh reported that the president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges said the school is being sent a letter about a new investigation.

Belle Wheelan said the new investigation will focus on the findings of an Oct. 22 independent review that found nearly two decades of academic fraud.

That investigation found hundreds of fake independent studies and no-show classes in African and African-American Studies taken by more than 3,100 students, about half of them athletes.

The review by the accrediting agency is expected to last for months. No decision by the agency's board is expected until June.