

Bush looks to do damage control

Libby resignation muddies image

BY JOHN WULSIN
STAFF WRITER

The resignation Friday of a senior White House official has left the Bush administration struggling to repair its faltering image.

Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby resigned after being indicted on two charges of false statements, two charges of perjury and one charge of obstruction of justice.

"(Libby's resignation is) a big loss for the vice president and the administration," said Michael Gerhardt, a professor at the UNC School of Law. "It's not clear whether there's anybody who could fill Libby's void."

Losing Libby is a major blow to the Bush administration following Harriet Miers' withdrawal from the Supreme Court confirmation process, sluggish responses to hur-

ricanes and the U.S. military death toll in Iraq passing the 2,000 mark, Gerhardt said.

It will require most of the administration's dwindling political capital to recover from losing one of its top advisers, he added.

Patrick Basham, a senior fellow at the Center for Representative Government at the Cato Institute, said the timing of the charges is what is most significant.

"This administration has faced something of a perfect storm over the last few weeks," he said.

"(The indictment will) resonate nationally because it will come at a time when the president is at his weakest politically."

He said the administration is experiencing a "death by a thousand cuts ... suffering one cut after another."

Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald explained the indictment in a press conference Friday afternoon when he ran through the chronology of events and then summarized the charges against Libby.

"(Libby) was ... the first official to disclose this information outside the government to a reporter," Fitzgerald said. "And then he lied about it afterwards, under oath and repeatedly."

The indictment comes after more than two years of investigation into the leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame Wilson's classified identity.

The indictment alleges that Libby lied in his testimony when he said that he merely passed information about Valerie Wilson's identity from one reporter to another and neither confirmed nor disproved that she worked for the CIA.

"Mr. Libby's story that he was at the tail end of a chain of phone calls, passing on from one reporter what he heard from another, was not true. It was false," Fitzgerald said.

As for how high up the responsibility will run, Fitzgerald's comments were intentionally ambiguous. Many reporters wanted to know if Karl Rove, the president's

top political adviser, was under investigation.

The indictment references a senior "Official A" in the White House who discussed Wilson's identity with Robert Novak of The New York Times.

Fitzgerald answered multiple questions about Official A by explaining that, by law, he is bound to secrecy.

"I know that people want to know whatever it is that we know, and they're probably sitting at home with the TV thinking, 'I want to jump through the TV, grab him by his collar and tell him to tell us everything they figured out over the last two years,'" Fitzgerald said.

"We just can't do that. It's not because we enjoy holding back information from you. That's the law."

If convicted on all five counts, Libby could face a maximum of 30 years in prison.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.



DTH/BLAKE KIMBALL

The Middle School Dance in the Carmichael Ballroom on Saturday night was organized to raise money for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

UNC turns back clock for hurricane response

BY EMILY BISKER
STAFF WRITER

The Macarena rang out in the Carmichael Ballroom as students relived the awkwardness of their middle-school years.

Members of Extended Katrina Relief hosted a dance with a middle-school theme Saturday night to raise funds for hurricane victims.

"Middle school was the most amazing and awkward time," sophomore Will West said.

All proceeds, including those from ticket and homemade-corsage sales, will go toward the fundraising group's \$10,000 goal.

With this money, the group plans to rebuild a home during Thanksgiving break that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in Gulfport, Miss.

Students who participated in the dance said they were impressed by the atmosphere of the dance itself, which included a choice selection of music from the late 1990s.

The middle-school theme is a good conversation starter, said sophomore Delaney Kloesel. "It's just fun. People can revert back to middle-school times."

Sophomore Tiffany McDole said the theme was creative. "When else do you get to dance to 'Mmmmbop' with 100 other college students?"

The dance was successful, sophomore Rachel Osborn said, because it was different from other events.

"I'm having the best time I've had since middle school," she said. The purpose of Extended Katrina

Relief is to provide long-term relief for the hurricane's victims.

"People stop caring after a while," said Mary Small, EKR chairwoman.

Disasters happen all the time, she said, and problems associated with them do not end once the media stops covering them.

The group vows to remain active in Katrina relief for the next year, at least, Small said.

McDole said she was impressed by Small's efforts to help victims throughout a long period of time.

"Relief stops fast," McDole said. She said EKR is unique in its mission to prolong relief efforts.

But EKR is not the only group on campus continuing to provide support for hurricane victims.

The Office of Human Resources is holding a food drive during the first full week of each month through January, and the UNC Chapter of the Red Cross is asking for student donations to support relief efforts.

The School of Social Work is sponsoring a food collection drive in conjunction with the Food Bank of Eastern and Central North Carolina and America's Second Harvest, the nation's food bank network.

A Web site, www.41for41.com, also has been set up in honor of UNC basketball player and Gulf port native Byron Sanders, asking fans to donate \$41 — his jersey number — each to hurricane relief.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Miers' withdrawal shifts spotlight

BY LINDSEY NAYLOR
STAFF WRITER

The recent withdrawal of Harriet Miers' Supreme Court nomination has left Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the bench, and many wonder what her continued presence could mean for upcoming cases.

Michael Gerhardt, professor of constitutional law at the UNC School of Law, said O'Connor's presence is significant because of her moderate stance and tendency to be the deciding vote in controversial cases.

"As long as she is there, she has power over the center," he said.

Despite her influence, Gerhardt said he doubts the process of bringing cases to the court will change because there is a finite time in which to make appeals.

"I think that the timing of cases have a schedule unto themselves, and I'm not sure how much control you'll have over that within the next few months," said William Marshall, professor of law at UNC.

One of the most hotly debated

issues is whether O'Connor's continued presence on the bench will have any bearing on abortion cases being brought before the court.

Experts said anti-abortion groups will wait to gauge the views and priorities of O'Connor's eventual replacement before attempting to bring divisive issues before the court.

Tom Hansford, professor of political science at the University of South Carolina, said a conservative replacement might encourage right-wing communities to enact the kind of anti-abortion legislation that might reach the Court.

He named the anti-abortion Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen as one justice who might elicit that type of response.

Gerhardt said the most pressing issue will be partial-birth abortion, which O'Connor voted to uphold in 2000. But Roe v. Wade itself is not in danger of being overturned, he said.

"Roe is probably not going to rise or fall with O'Connor's replacement," he said.

With Miers' withdrawal

"In this scenario Bush may please his base but face the embarrassment of another failed nomination."

TOM HANSFORD, PROFESSOR

Thursday came instant speculation as to whom President Bush would nominate next.

Hansford said the ideal candidate from a Republican standpoint would be a known conservative judge, such as Judge Michael Luttig, of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to appease the more conservative elements of the party.

But he said Democrats spent no political capital on the Miers' nomination, putting them in a better position to filibuster any nominee they perceive as leaning too far to the right.

"In this scenario Bush may please his base but face the embarrassment of another failed nomination," he said.

Gerhardt said the approval of a conservative nomination will

be harder because of Miers' withdrawal.

"The next nominee will face the same kind of close scrutiny that Miers faced," he said.

Hansford said Bush might choose to nominate someone like now-Chief Justice John Roberts — an experienced and, most importantly, confirmable conservative.

But he said a third scenario could pit Bush against the far-right members of his party who did not fully support Miers' nomination.

In this case, someone such as Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, a close friend of the president who is reasonably qualified and far from radically conservative, might be nominated.

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