

# Comey, James press for dismissal of their cases

## Both challenge prosecutor’s appointment

**BY ERIC TUCKER**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Lawyers for former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James asked a judge Thursday to dismiss the cases against them, saying the prosecutor who secured the indictments was illegally installed in the role.

U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie said she expects to decide by Thanksgiving on challenges to Lindsey Halligan’s appointment as interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. That decision could help determine the fate of the politically charged cases, which were both shepherded by the hastily installed Halligan and together have amplified concerns that

the Justice Department is being used as a weapon to target President Donald Trump’s perceived adversaries.

Halligan was installed in the job at Trump’s urging by Attorney General Pam Bondi in September, just days before Comey was indicted, in what defense lawyers say was an end-run around the constitutional and statutory rules governing the appointment of U.S. attorneys. They say the maneuver was designed to ensure indictments against the president’s political opponents after the prosecutor who had been overseeing the two investigations, but had not brought charges, was effectively forced out.

“Ms. Halligan was the sole prosecutor in the grand jury room, and when the sole prose-

cutor lacks the authority,” said Ephraim McDowell, one of Comey’s defense lawyers, “that’s not going to be a harmless error.”

U.S. attorneys, top federal prosecutors who oversee regional Justice Department outposts across the country, are typically nominated by the president and then confirmed by the Senate. Attorneys general do have the authority to name an interim U.S. attorney who can serve for 120 days, but lawyers for Comey and James argued that once that period expires, the law gives federal judges the exclusive say of who gets to fill the vacancy.

**THE INTERIM US ATTORNEY RESIGNED UNDER PRESSURE**

After then-interim U.S. attorney Erik Siebert resigned in September while facing Trump administration pressure to bring charges against Comey and James, Bondi installed Halligan, a White House aide with no prior

prosecutorial experience. The appointment followed a Trump post on Truth Social in which he complained to Bondi about the lack of prosecutorial action against his political enemies and said, “JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!”

Siebert had been appointed by Bondi in January to serve as interim U.S. attorney. Trump in May announced his intention to nominate him, and judges in the Eastern District unanimously agreed after his 120-day period expired that he should be retained in the role.

But after the Trump administration effectively pushed him out in September, the Justice Department again opted to make an interim appointment in place of the courts, something defense lawyers say it was not empowered under the law to do.

“If the government were to prevail here,” McDowell said, then it

“would never need to go through Senate confirmation again for U.S. attorneys.” He said any dismissal of the indictment must be permanent, with no opportunity to bring the case again, to avoid rewarding the government for a violation.

**THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT DEFENDS HALLIGAN’S APPOINTMENT**

The Justice Department maintains that the law does not explicitly prohibit successive appointments of interim U.S. attorneys by the attorney general. Henry Whitaker, a lawyer for the department, argued that the indictment was properly returned by a grand jury and should not be dismissed over what he described as at most a paperwork or clerical error.

“The grand jury made a decision based on the facts and the law, and they followed their oath,” Whitaker said.

## SNAP

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**STATES SHIFTING FROM ZERO TO FULL SPEED FOR BENEFITS**

In some states where SNAP recipients had received nothing during November, officials said they are working to load money on to people’s electronic benefit cards by Friday, if not sooner.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services said Thursday that full November SNAP benefits are expected to be available at midnight for people to buy groceries.

“This has been difficult for our beneficiaries, and we are incredibly appreciative to our partners across the state who helped bridge the gap through

food pantries, donation drives, and other assistance efforts,” department Secretary Janet Mann said in a statement.

Officials in South Carolina and West Virginia, which also had not issued November benefits, said the full monthly amount should be available by Friday. And Alabama said full SNAP benefits should be issued Thursday.

North Carolina, which issued partial benefits last week, said full monthly SNAP benefits should be loaded on people’s electronic cards by Friday. Colorado said it was switching from delivering partial to full SNAP benefits Thursday.

The Illinois Department of Human Services, which previously issued partial November benefits, said Thursday that it is “working to restore full SNAP benefits.” But it won’t happen instantly.

## FAA

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the spike in understaffing at airport towers and regional control centers prompted the flight cut order due to concerns about safety. The existing shortage of several thousand controllers is so bad that even a small number of absences in some locations caused problems.

Officials at FAA and the Transportation Department didn’t offer any updates Thursday morning about when they will decide to lift the order. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy has said the decision will be based on the safety data that experts at the FAA are watching closely.

The airlines say they will be ready and expect that normal operations will resume within three or four days after the order is lifted.

Some experts have suggested that problems might linger longer than that and could affect Thanksgiving travel, so it is difficult to predict whether the airlines will be able to recover from this as quickly as they do after a major snowstorm disrupts their operations and leaves planes and crews out of position.

Airlines focused cuts on smaller regional routes to minimize the impact on main hubs. By late Thursday afternoon, only a little over 1,000 flights had been cancelled across the country. Aviation analytics firm Cirium said nearly 95% of all flights nationwide Thursday were on time.

“We are eager to resume normal operations over the next few days once the FAA gives clearance. We look forward to welcoming 31 million passengers—a new record—to our flights during the upcoming Thanksgiving travel period, beginning next Friday,” the Airlines for America trade group said Thursday.

## OMSH

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industries make connections within their communities to let young people know about career opportunities,” Howard said. “This event represents the strength of our river communities — bridging both sides of the Ohio River to show students that maritime careers are not only vital to our economy but also accessible right here in their hometowns.”

We Work the Waterways began holding Maritime Interaction Days in 2011 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

“At that time, it was more like a traditional career fair,” Howard said. “But we found that students were bored and that the information could be redundant. So, that’s why over the years, we’ve evolved it to be interactive and engaging and learning life skills or operational skills that they might need to work at any one of these companies.”

Students were divided into three large groups that rotated between stations inside the OMSH, a presentation at First Baptist Church across the street, and a trip to the Owensboro Riverport.

The program presented at the church, Howard said, “utilizes industry professionals” who talk to students about career opportunities within the maritime industry.

“What’s unique, or cool, is that we do these events all around the country, and it doesn’t matter if we’re in Louisiana or Iowa or Owensboro. The kids are getting the same introduction to the maritime industry as anywhere else,” she said. “So, for the presentation, we use the same for-



Photo by Greg Eans, Messenger-Inquirer | geans@messenger-inquirer.com

**Andrew Finn with the barge line Crouse Corporation out of Paducah, right, shows Owensboro High School student Landon Wink a bumper used to serve as a cushion between a barge and a lock wall during We Work the Waterways at the Owensboro Museum of Science & History.**

mat, but we utilize the local industry professionals to present different parts of it.”

Howard said students also received a guided tour of the Owensboro Riverport, “getting to see the equipment and things up close, in logistics and movement, in action.”

The museum portion of the event featured 14 stations, called “explorer dock learning stations,” Howard said.

“These stations are designed to be hands-on and engaging, visually engaging, stimulating, and something they might learn if they were to pursue a career in any one of these companies. Something they might experience on the job,” she said.

Howard said Old National Bank set up a station to teach students about life skills.

“We talk about career opportunities and climbing

the ladder, and how much money you can make as you do that, and we realized we were missing an opportunity,” Howard said. “We talked to the kids about how they can spend that money, but we want to teach them how they can save, so we even have a bank here today talking to the kids about that.”

Additional stations included “bumper building, where kids learn how to build bumpers that they build out on tow; line throwing and handling; a man overboard station where they learn what happens when someone goes overboard; an elevator pitch station where they’re learning how to give their elevator pitch; and a dive company that’s talking to the kids about how, when you’re underwater, the equipment they use and how they communicate underwater in limited visibility,” Howard said.

Howard said she has heard positive feedback from teachers about previous Maritime Interaction Days.

“A teacher during our first presentation, because I ask the teachers in front of the students why they brought the kids here, said there were four students who came to our program last year that are now working in the maritime industry, and we’re hearing more and more stories like that,” she said.

Most importantly, Howard said the program is a “great collaboration between for-profit businesses, the nonprofit partners and the schools.”

“We even have an environmental education group here called the Foundation for Ohio River Education

that is talking to the students about careers related to the environmental side of things. The USS LST 325 is here talking about maritime history,” she said. “I love how we are all competing for the same group of employees, but together as an industry, we are promoting the maritime industry. Later, the kids can decide which particular company they want to go to, but I just think it’s such a special collaboration of how people work together to inspire these kids.”

Maritime industry partners helping with Maritime Interaction Day included ARTCo, Corn Island Shipyard, Mulzer Crushed Stone, FORE/ORSANCO, Crouse Corporation, Riverview Boat and Tug Services, Marquette Transportation, Castlen Marine, Marine Solutions, Campbell Transportation Company, CGB Enterprises, USS LST 325, Old National Bank, American Commercial Barge Line, Ports of Indiana, Owensboro Riverport

Authority, the Owensboro Museum of Science and History, Evansville Marine Service and Boatside Deliveries.

According to a press release from We Work the Waterways, the region has “long been a cornerstone of inland maritime commerce.”

“The Ohio River serves as a vital transportation corridor that moves more than 200 million tons of cargo annually, connecting manufacturers, energy producers and agricultural enterprises to global markets,” the press release states. “Kentucky ranks among the nation’s top 10 states for inland waterway tonnage, and Indiana’s 400 miles of navigable waterways support a thriving maritime economy that contributes over \$21 billion annually to the state’s GDP. Together, the two states form a critical hub for river-based trade, logistics, and employment, making maritime education essential for sustaining the region’s economic future.”

## TERM

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The civil enforcement unit has taken some tasks away from road deputies, giving them more availability to answer calls for service, Youngman said.

“I constantly hear people see us more,” he said. “Our response times are improving.”

Other changes during Youngman’s term include acquiring body cameras for deputies and obtaining a deputy pay raise, he said.

Youngman said in the campaign release: “Our [crime] clearance rates are among the best in Kentucky; we’ve solved serious crimes at a much high-

er rate than the national average, and cleared most property crimes, too.”

According to the sheriff’s office annual report, the department had a crime clearance rate for Part I violent crimes of 59.9% in 2024, compared with the national average of 41.1%. A crime is considered cleared if it results in an arrest, the case or allegation is determined to be unfounded, or the victim chooses not to cooperate with investigators.

The office’s Part II property crime clearance rate in 2024 was 75.4%, compared with the 13.9% national average, according to the 2024 annual report.

“I have a great team here,” Youngman said. “They face things head-on.”

Of a future term, he said, “Going forward, the biggest thing will be growing the office, followed by efficiency.”

### Lottery Numbers

Thursday’s lottery numbers:

- Kentucky**
- Midday Pick 3:** 4-9-5
- Midday Pick 4:** 4-4-6-2
- Evening Pick 3:** 8-4-9
- Evening Pick 4:** 6-0-0-6
- Cash Ball 225:** 16-18-28-29; The Cash Ball was 7
- Lucky For Life:** 3-9-16-20-42 The Lucky Ball was 11
- Indiana**
- Midday Daily 3:** 9-9-6
- Super Ball was 1**
- Midday Daily 4:** 5-9-1-4
- Super Ball was 1**
- Evening Daily 3:** 3-9-3
- Super Ball was 6**
- Evening Daily 4:** 9-4-1-4
- Super Ball was 6**
- Cash 5:** 6-10-20-28-31

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