

TRUMP CAN'T EVEN WEAPONIZE DOJ COMPETENTLY

It is, no doubt, terrible that EDVA US Attorney Erik Siebert was forced out yesterday because he refused to charge Tish James with fraud when there's little evidence she engaged in mortgage fraud.

But there are aspects of the firing that make it epically incompetent and, like the quid pro quo with Eric Adams and the effort to send hundreds of men to a concentration camp beforehand, may backfire going forward.

ABC, which was the first to report on the firing, confirms that Seibert received notice that Trump wanted to fire him on Thursday, which presumably is how both ABC and NBC reported he was expected to be fired in advance of that happening.

Siebert was notified of the president's intention to fire him Thursday, sources said, and Trump said Friday afternoon in the Oval Office that he wanted Siebert "out" of his position.

That meant that the reason for the firing – the refuse to indict James – was public before it happened.

And even though Trump has reversed engineered a different reason for the firing – it's not that he's firing Siebert because Siebert won't prosecute Tish James, it's that he was backed by both Virginia's Democratic Senators, which was true and apparent when Trump nominated Siebert – in the same breath he insisted that Seibert had not quit, but instead Trump had fired him.

Today I withdrew the Nomination of Erik Siebert as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, when I was informed that he received the UNUSUALLY

STRONG support of the two absolutely terrible, sleazebag Democrat Senators, from the Great State of Virginia. He didn't quit, I fired him! Next time let him go in as a Democrat, not a Republican.

Particularly given ABC's report that Siebert would like to stay on at EDVA as an AUSA, this text, demanding credit for *firing* Siebert, changes Siebert's legal options going forward, and the impact of the firing on cases Siebert wouldn't charge.

Both NYT and WaPo report that Todd Blanche (and Pam Bondi, NYT adds) tried to save Siebert's job.

Attorney General Pam Bondi and Todd Blanche, the deputy attorney general who runs the day-to-day operations of the Justice Department, had privately defended Mr. Siebert against officials, including William J. Pulte, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, who had urged that he be fired and replaced with a prosecutor who would push the cases forward, according to a senior law enforcement official.

□Mr. Pulte's power far outstrips his role as the head of an obscure housing agency. He has gained Mr. Trump's favor by pushing mortgage fraud allegations against perceived adversaries of the White House, including Ms. James; a Federal Reserve governor, Lisa Cook; and Senator Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California.

Mr. Pulte has made use of his influence and access to a president who prefers advisers who are willing to push boundaries. He had told Mr. Trump directly that he believed Mr. Siebert could be doing more, according to several officials with knowledge of the

matter.

But Mr. Blanche, like Mr. Siebert, questioned the legal viability of bringing charges against Ms. James, according to current and former department officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk about internal discussions.

WaPo added the unsurprising bit that Ed Martin, who works for Bondi and Blanche, also weighed in to get Siebert fired.

They added that Ed Martin, the Justice Department official who is overseeing criminal investigations based on Pulte's allegations, also pushed for Siebert to be removed.

Todd Blanche is Trump's fixer, neck deep in an effort to make Trump's sex-trafficking problems go away. He has not shied, at all, from enacting Trump's campaign of revenge. And yet somehow it got reported that Blanche, "questioned the legal viability of bringing charges against Ms. James."

The firing creates all sorts of headaches for Blanche. All of DOJ knows that Eagle Ed, along with Bill Pulte (who is not a lawyer and whose primary career skill has been benefitting from nepotism) got Siebert removed over Blanche's objections. But it's also public that even *Blanche* agrees there's no case against James. Who is in charge of DOJ if Eagle Ed, never a prosecutor and prone to embarrassing gaffes when he tries to play lawyer more generally, can override Blanche's personnel and prosecutorial decisions?

And it's not just the James prosecution that will be difficult to charge in EDVA, though I can imagine judges there will be very skeptical of this investigation going forward. NYT also reports that Dan Richman, whose testimony

prosecutors obtained in an effort to charge Jim Comey for statements he made four years and 355 days ago (meaning the statute of limitation expires in coming weeks), didn't tell them what they wanted him to.

Mr. Richman's statements to prosecutors were not helpful in their efforts to build a case against Mr. Comey, according to two people familiar with the matter.

It's not clear that firing Siebert will achieve the ostensible objective – to install someone who will charge James and Comey, in spite of the evidence. If that were to happen, it might well blow up in epic fashion.

And whatever happens, this badly undermines Blanche's hold on DOJ (even as various MAGAs have it in for Bondi and/or Kash).

Plus, some Republicans in Congress were already uncomfortable (anonymously) with Pulte's tantrums.

"I think he's a nut," one House Republican said of Pulte. (Like others in this story, the lawmaker was granted anonymity to speak candidly about sensitive dynamics within the Trump administration.)

"The guy's just a little too big for his britches," said a second GOP lawmaker, who sits on the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees housing policy and the FHFA. "I've got great respect for Bessent for taking him on."

Partly that's concern for the Fed, but it cannot have escaped their notice how easy it is to claim people engaged in mortgage fraud, not to mention the way such concerns could influence Ken Paxton's challenge to John Cornyn in the Texas Senate primary.

None of that mitigates the dangers of this kind

of weaponization. They just make it more likely that efforts to weaponize DOJ will create larger and larger problems for Blanche and possibly even for Trump.

Update: Reuters reports that a woman once investigated, but not charged, for involvement in January 6 has been appointed Acting US Attorney.

A former federal prosecutor who once claimed former President Joe Biden's administration targeted her for being conservative told colleagues in an email on Saturday that she has been named to replace a top prosecutor who resigned on Friday after President Donald Trump had said he wanted him out.

In an internal email seen by Reuters, Mary "Maggie" Cleary told attorneys she has been "unexpectedly" tapped to be acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. She did not immediately respond to an email from Reuters seeking comment.

Update: Trump has sent (two times, I think) a post berating Pam Bondi for not prosecuting his enemies, and then announced he'll nominate Lindsey Halligan, the insurance lawyer who served as local counsel in his Florida case.