



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 21, 2022

In Blatant Political Move, Biden Administration Demotes Temporary Head of ATF

With Joe Biden's poll numbers dropping out of sight and the obliteration of his first nominee to head up the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), progressives were screaming for something good to happen.

The New York Times [responded](#), sounding the death knell for the agency's present temporary head of the agency, Marvin Richardson, back in January, and [on Wednesday the White House confirmed his demotion](#) from temporary director to deputy director.



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The timing has everything to do with the November elections. Richardson, a 30-year veteran of the ATF, is due to retire next year. His relationship with the gun industry was professional and cordial. But in today's toxic political environment, even being black couldn't save Richardson.

From the *Times*:

In late January, Marvin G. Richardson, the acting director of the [ATF], told a gathering of weapons manufacturers that the rule banning online sales of [ghost gun parts] would not be completed until June....

This infuriated some Biden allies....

Progressives see Mr. Richardson's low-key leadership ... as part of the problem.

Richardson was just doing his job. The "ghost gun" initiative has generated the largest-ever response to any ATF anti-gun move: More than 250,000 comments were received in opposition to it during the "public comment" period required before the initiative could become active. Richardson was forced to dedicate 30 ATF employees to go through the comments before he could make the rule permanent.

Biden's first nominee, David Chipman, went down in flames thanks to his odious anti-gun position. Biden's second, Steve Dettelbach, is cut from the same cloth, and his Senate confirmation is increasingly unlikely.

So, in a signal to progressives, Biden and his handlers decided Richardson was expendable. In an exclusive, Stephen Gutowski, writing for the pro-Second Amendment blog *The Reload*, detailed what he learned from his contacts inside the agency:

The reshuffling was announced by Richardson on a conference call on Monday, which left many ATF officials surprised and dismayed....

"The news that he was being replaced came as a shock to most of us within the agency," one ATF official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, told *The Reload*.



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Richardson was too friendly with the firearms industry, according to the *Times*. He had worked hard to maintain cordial relations with the industry for a very good reason: Many good tips on potential violators came from gun dealers. Said one of Gutowski's sources:

A lot of the tips that we would get on illegal firearms activity from straw purchasers to traffickers came from dealers.

The reality is just a very, very small percentage of gun dealers are bad. So, those partnerships are important, and Marvin really did a good job at nurturing those relationships....

The fact that he has those relationships may not have sat well with the current administration. And I'm sure that that might've helped them push him out.

Indeed, the Biden administration is intending to weaponize the ATF against those very gun dealers, hoping to put many of them out of business for even the most minor infractions of the agency's rules.

As far back as October 2020, Lawrence Keane, general counsel for the firearms trade association National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), saw what was coming in the event Biden somehow won the White House:

The Biden-Harris ticket will weaponize the ATF against retailers to close them down for even minor errors in inspections....

Kamala Harris ... has vowed to turn the ATF from an agency which assists family-owned retail businesses to stay within the overwhelming labyrinth of federal and state laws and regulations to one that carries a heavy hammer and will shutter federally licensed retailers for minor administrative errors.

On Wednesday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki announced that the U.S. attorney for the district of Arizona, Gary Restaino, will take Richardson's place until such time as a permanent director is confirmed.

The move could be costly politically. As Ed Morrissey noted in *Hot Air*:

Put the optics of demoting one of the few black agency heads there are in the Biden administration, and it's a recipe for embarrassment and chaos, if not disaster.

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