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Dean of Ohio State law school Nancy Rogers to head Ohio attorney general's office

Posted by [Reginald Fields](#) May 28, 2008 15:57PM
 Categories: [News Impact](#)

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COLUMBUS -- Gov. Ted Strickland, looking to restore order in the scandal-ridden Ohio attorney general's office, appointed the highly respected dean of Ohio State University's law school to lead the state agency.



Nancy Rogers

But Nancy Hardin Rogers made it clear that she is merely a five-month caretaker, brought in to attempt a miraculous quick-fix.

The office has been tarnished by a sex harassment scandal that forced former Attorney General Marc Dann to quit two weeks ago.

Rogers, 59, said she will not be a candidate for the post in this fall's election but will return to teaching. In the interim, she hopes to bring the state office back to respectability, a place where bright legal minds want to work for public service.

"It's a shame that the actions of a limited number of persons who did not live up to these values have undermined the public's confidence in this office," Rogers said at a news conference in the governor's office, where she was introduced by Strickland.

"It has led some to doubt that the attorney general still carries the moral authority that is needed to serve the people of Ohio," she said. "The situation must be turned around quickly."

She won't have much time.

Voters will elect someone to fill the last two years of Dann's four-year term in the Nov. 4 election.

The Republican and Democratic parties have until Aug. 20 to select their candidates. Robert M. Owens, a Delaware County attorney, filed Tuesday to be an independent candidate.

Strickland said he had the fall election in mind when he chose Rogers - someone passionate about the legal profession with an impeccable reputation and none of the political baggage that sometimes accompanies such appointments.

"I felt that it was important that we not have the individual who is trying to deal with the immediate problems facing the attorney general's office to immediately be engaged in a political campaign," Strickland said during the news conference.

Afterward, he added: "Her only agenda will be to provide strong, confident, appropriate leadership to the attorney general's office."

Over the past two months, a sexual harassment investigation at the attorney general's office exposed mismanagement by Dann, cost four top managers their jobs and led Dann to admit to an extramarital affair with a staffer.

Ohio House Democrats had brought nine articles of impeachment against Dann the day before he resigned.

The state inspector general is now investigating the office under Dann, a sweeping



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inquiry that involves the state Highway Patrol and the Franklin County prosecutor's office.

Separately on Wednesday, the attorney general's office released thousands of e-mail and text messages between Dann and his former scheduler Jessica Utovich, the woman he was romantically linked to.

The messages were similar to those released in April, which contained chummy references to drinking, practical jokes and joshing about religion.

Strickland said he considered dozens of people to replace Dann but only a few seriously. He had an "exploratory" conversation with one other person, whom he would not name, but Rogers was the only person offered the job. That offer came last Friday.

Strickland was hailed across the state by academics, lawyers and politicians for choosing Rogers.

Ohio State President E. Gordon Gee said Strickland made an "inspired choice."

Rogers is a Democrat, though the governor said that did not factor in his decision.

Rogers, a dispute-resolution expert, is a Nebraska native who graduated from Yale Law School. She was a law clerk for former U.S. District Judge Thomas D. Lambros in Cleveland from 1972 to 1974 and a staff attorney for the Cleveland Legal Aid Society from 1974 to 1975.

She then became a visiting professor at Ohio State University in 1976 where she has remained, rising through the ranks. She has served as a faculty coordinator and vice provost for academic administration and in 2001 was named dean of the university's Moritz College of Law.

Rogers joked that her first order of business at the attorney general's office would be to get reacquainted with scores of former students who now suddenly work for her. She had no immediate comments on whether she would make staff changes or how she might handle pending cases.

Her husband, Douglas, is a partner with the law firm of Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease. Douglas Rogers has contributed money to campaigns for both Democratic and Republican candidates since 1990, including \$200 to Marc Dann in 2006, according to records. Nancy Rogers in 1998 contributed \$1,000 to the campaign of former Republican Gov. Bob Taft.

The Rogerses' daughter, Kimberly Robinson, is a law clerk for Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Moyer, a Republican.

Rogers doesn't have much time, but she is determined.

"We will," she said, "earn and win back public confidence in the office of the attorney general."

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