

## FTC Head Simons Stepping Down

By **Bryan Koenig**

*Law360 (January 19, 2021, 11:24 AM EST)* -- Federal Trade Commission Chairman Joseph J. Simons announced Tuesday he will step down from the agency's top post on Jan. 29, paving the way for a new, Democratic FTC majority under the Biden administration.

Simons' resignation statement also said much of the FTC's front office is departing as well, including general counsel Alden F. Abbott, Bureau of Competition Director Ian Conner, Bureau of Consumer Protection Director Andrew Smith and Office of Policy Planning Director Bilal Sayyed.

"It's been a great honor to lead this incredible organization filled with so many talented people working on behalf of American consumers," Simons said in his statement. "As technology and our economy continue to evolve through the digital age, the FTC's staff work tirelessly so that consumers continue to benefit from a fair and competitive marketplace. It's been a privilege to be part of that effort."

FTC commissioners are appointed to seven-year terms, and Simons could have chosen to finish out his tenure, which would have run until May 2025. But he chose to step down, as is customary with changes in administration, when a new chair is picked. That means President-elect Joe Biden will have at least two FTC roles to fill, shifting the five-member agency's majority from GOP to Democrat control.

Biden created the first open spot Monday with the announcement that he'd be nominating one of the FTC's two current Democrats, Rohit Chopra, as the next Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director.

The new FTC will have to fill a number of vacancies created by the departures announced Tuesday. Also leaving, according to the FTC, are Competition Bureau Deputy Directors Gail Levine and Daniel Francis, Bureau of Economics Director Andrew Sweeting and Office of Public Affairs Director Cathy MacFarlane.

Former FTC staffers told Law360 on Tuesday that while it's common for the front office, all political appointees, to change over with a new administration, the announcement of so many departures all at once is unusual.

"It's a little more organized this time than usual," said Lisa Kimmel, a senior counsel in Crowell & Moring's antitrust group and an FTC alum.

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