

Who will be the DEA administrator?

By Gary Fouse

As a retired DEA agent, I have been following the Trump nomination process with greater than usual interest. I am gratified that Matt Gaetz dropped out of the attorney general nomination, and I think Pam Bondi will do a fine job as AG. There is no reason to oppose her though many of the Democrats will vote against her because she is a partisan conservative.

Right now, my biggest concern is who Trump will pick for DEA administrator. He could have left the current administrator, Anne Milgram in place, but this week, he announced that Hillsborough County (Fl) Sheriff Chad Chronister was his pick.

I had previously heard nothing about him, but within the DEA retirees' grapevine, there was widespread disapproval of the pick. Most of the objections centered around his arrest of a local pastor for holding services during the Covid pandemic, as well as his active promotion of the controversial DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). Just a couple of days after Trump's announcement, Chronister withdrew his name from consideration. It seems there was simply too much opposition. Another factor may have been the fact that his son was sentenced to prison in 2018 for stabbing someone the previous year.

There are two names that seem to be preferred by the retired DEA community, Derek Maltz and Mike Chapman, the latter of whom is Sheriff of Loudoun County, Virginia. Both are retired DEA agents.

[Maltz](#) had a very distinguished career with DEA and was a top-level manager. Since his retirement, he has become a national spokesman regarding the fentanyl crisis. That is presently,

DEA's top enforcement priority, and he would no doubt continue that policy.

[Chapman](#) also had a distinguished career in DEA and has acquired more managerial experience since his retirement, especially as Loudoun County sheriff, where he has earned many accolades.

In the interest of full disclosure, during my career in DEA (1973-1995) I never had any contact or dealings with these two gentlemen. Post-retirement, I did happen to meet Mr. Chapman at the annual retirees' conference in Orlando a few years ago. By chance, we were seated at the same table during the formal closing dinner and had a chance to talk. I have never met Mr Maltz.

So what type of administrator does DEA need? Without dismissing the current administrator, Anne Milgram, I feel that the administrator should be someone with drug law experience as well as managerial experience. Ideally, the nominee would have political support, at least with the president, and hopefully within Congress. In addition, it would be helpful if the person was a former or current DEA agent with managerial experience both in the field and at the headquarters level- someone who understands the culture of the agency and can relate to the agents in the field. I admit, it is hard to find someone with all of those qualities. Most of our administrators have come from the outside; some have been good, others not so much.

I would also like to see someone who could come in and restore some of the traditional street activities of DEA, notably undercover work. It has often been perceived among us retirees that the agency has somewhat gone away from "street work". Drug enforcement is a very distinct type of police work. It is a totally different culture from the FBI, and any attempts to mold DEA into the FBI's image (which have been made) are ill-advised.

I don't know enough about the current administrator, Anne Milgram, to opine as to whether she should be replaced or kept in her position. Incoming President Trump intends to replace her, and I just hope he makes a wise choice the second time around.