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Justice Department Antitrust Chief Faces Internal Pushback

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Tensions are reportedly mounting within the Trump administration's Justice Department over the leadership style and strategic direction of Gail Slater, the Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division. While Slater enjoys solid backing from top officials, her approach to enforcement and policy has sparked criticism from certain administration insiders and business interests.

Appointed in March 2025, Slater now leads one of the administration's highest-profile regulatory arms, overseeing key antitrust lawsuits involving tech companies like Google, Apple, and Capital One. According to sources familiar with internal discussions, some officials have voiced frustration with Slater's refusal to grant Trump-aligned lobbyists and consultants influence over policy decisions, particularly concerning corporate mergers.

One recent White House meeting, which included members of the Office of Management and Budget, the National Economic Council, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), exposed disagreements about Slater's handling of high-profile mergers involving firms such as T-Mobile and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise. Critics argue her insistence on keeping merger talks within the Department of Justice (DOJ), rather than involving outside political operatives, has confused and delayed the resolution of pending cases.

Despite these criticisms, Slater has received strong endorsements from within the administration. Attorney General Pam Bondi's office and FTC Commissioner Mark Meador both praised her efforts. Meador called her "a fantastic partner" in the joint mission of the DOJ and the FTC, emphasizing her professionalism and collaboration. Slater's Senate confirmation, approved by a bipartisan 78 votes, also signaled broad political support for her appointment.

Supporters point to her efficient case closures and a more balanced, case-by-case approach compared to the previous administration. Notably, while the Biden-era Justice Department had opposed the Capital One–Discover merger, Slater's team allowed it to proceed after a thorough review. Her style has attracted praise even from some

progressive consumer advocates who value her legal consistency, even if they disagree on outcomes.

Nonetheless, unease remains among certain administration figures who view her independence as potentially out of step with President Trump's "America First" vision. Her resistance to political pressure and reliance on direct communication with legal representatives have made her a polarizing figure.

Ultimately, the tension surrounding Slater underscores a broader philosophical divide: should regulatory officials act as legal arbiters or political instruments? The answer may define the direction of antitrust enforcement for the remainder of Trump's term, particularly as high-stakes corporate deals and tech industry consolidation continue to dominate the economic landscape.