

FTC Chairman Simons Announces his Resignation and the Departure of Senior Staff

January 19, 2021

Federal Trade Commission Chairman Joseph J. Simons announced his resignation from the Commission today, effective January 29, 2021.

“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. “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.”

Simons was sworn in as Chairman of the FTC on May 1, 2018, having previously served as Director of the agency’s Bureau of Competition between 2001 and 2003 and in other senior positions in the Bureau during the 1980s. As Chairman, he has focused on vigorous enforcement of U.S. competition and consumer protection laws, including with respect to digital technology platforms. Under his leadership, the FTC has brought record numbers of cases challenging anticompetitive mergers and business conduct, as well as many cases cracking down on fraud and deception against consumers. For example, the FTC negotiated a settlement with Facebook that imposed an unprecedented \$5 billion in monetary penalties and held the company accountable for deceiving users about their ability to control the privacy of their personal information. The Commission subsequently filed a landmark monopolization case against Facebook, alleging that it illegally maintained its personal social networking monopoly through a years-long course of anticompetitive conduct.

Simons also announced the departure of a number of other senior staff from the Commission: General Counsel Alden F. Abbott; Bureau of Competition Director Ian Conner; Bureau of Competition Deputy Directors Gail Levine and Daniel Francis; Bureau of Consumer Protection Director Andrew Smith; Bureau of Economics Director Andrew Sweeting; Office of Public Affairs Director Cathy MacFarlane; and Office of Policy Planning Director Bilal Sayyed.

Counsel Alden F. Abbott was appointed by Chairman Simons in May 2018. Under Abbott’s leadership, the Office of Counsel has worked tirelessly to defend and preserve the Commission’s longstanding authority to recover money unlawfully taken from consumers in violation of laws enforced by the agency. The agency’s authority to obtain equitable relief is essential to protect consumers nationwide from unfair and deceptive practices and to maintain fair competition.

Bureau of Competition Director Ian Conner was appointed as a Deputy Director of the Bureau in September 2017 and subsequently named Director in November 2019. During Conner’s tenure, the Commission voted out 18 complaints challenging mergers, settled another 37 mergers through consent decree, and 27 merging parties abandoned while under investigation. The Commission also voted out nine complaints challenging monopolization and anticompetitive conduct by entities, including the recent monopolization case against Facebook. This period includes a historic level of activity in 2020, despite the challenges of the pandemic. The Bureau also established the Technology Task Force, now the Technology Enforcement Division, which brought the Facebook complaint just over a year after it became a permanent Division.

Bureau of Competition Deputy Director Gail Levine was appointed in October 2018. She has overseen dozens of merger reviews, anticompetitive conduct investigations, and antitrust litigation. She has played a critical role in the Commission’s enforcement efforts in a wide variety of industries, including in health care and high technology. She helped stand up the Technology Enforcement Division, and she has supervised it as Deputy Director from its inception. She oversaw the FTC’s nascent-competition challenge to Illumina’s proposed acquisition of Pacific Biosciences, the FTC’s

first product hopping cases (FTC v. Reckitt and FTC v. Indivior), and the FTC's successful challenge to a joint venture in the coal industry, Peabody/Arch Coal.

Bureau of Competition Deputy Director Daniel Francis was appointed Deputy Director in December 2019, after joining the agency as Senior Counsel to the Director in May 2018 and becoming Associate Director for Digital Markets in February 2019. Francis oversaw a number of investigations and litigations, including the Commission's challenges to the Procter & Gamble/Billie, CoStar/RentPath, Methodist/St. Francis, Hackensack/Englewood, and Harry's/Edgewell transactions. He also contributed to the Bureau's work in a number of other matters, particularly in digital and high-technology markets, played a leading role in the Commission's monopolization case against Facebook, and contributed to the Commission's actions against Qualcomm and Surescripts.

Bureau of Consumer Protection Director Andrew Smith was appointed by Chairman Simons in May 2018. Under Smith's tenure, the FTC continued its record of aggressive law enforcement on the consumer protection front, bringing more than 200 enforcement actions against companies such as Google, Office Depot, TikTok, Williams-Sonoma, University of Phoenix, and Match.com. The FTC also returned hundreds of millions of dollars to consumers, held CEOs responsible for corporate misconduct, and obtained novel injunctive relief and the biggest penalties in FTC history. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the agency swiftly responded with hundreds of warning letters; unprecedented outreach to consumers and businesses; and numerous enforcement actions targeting fake COVID cures, deceptive mail order scams, fake stimulus relief, small business financing scams, and work-at-home frauds, as well as an action against Zoom Video Communications for misrepresenting the extent of its data security.

Bureau of Economics Director Andrew Sweeting was appointed as head of the Bureau in January 2020. During his tenure, Sweeting has engaged in the successful management of law enforcement investigations on both the antitrust and consumer protection sides of the agency, and provided incisive advice to the Commission on cases big and small. Additionally, he played a major role in the crafting of the FTC/DOJ Vertical Merger Guidelines, and he contributed substantially to the FTC's enhanced merger retrospective research program.

Office of Public Affairs Director Cathy MacFarlane was appointed to the post in May 2018, having previously served as OPA Director from 2001 to 2003. During her recent tenure, MacFarlane led the development of a strategic plan for OPA and launched an overhaul and platform migration of the FTC.gov website. Over that time, the FTC responded to more than 7,000 media requests, facilitated more than 700 press interviews, and MacFarlane took a number of other steps to enhance the OPA's capabilities to reach and engage consumers and businesses through media and digital technologies.

Office of Policy Planning Director Bilal Sayyed was appointed by Chairman Simons in April 2018. During his tenure, the Office of Policy Planning (OPP) initiated and managed the Chairman's *Hearings on Competition and Consumer Protection in the 21st Century*. After the Hearings, staff of the Bureaus of Competition and Economics and OPP (working with the Department of Justice) drafted the first joint Vertical Merger Guidelines, and prepared the Vertical Merger Commentary. In addition, under Sayyed's leadership, OPP initiated the Commission's inquiry into over 500 acquisitions by Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft, released an important policy perspective paper on occupational license portability, and continued its advocacy efforts by offering a competition-oriented perspective on proposed state legislation and federal and state rulemakings.

The Federal Trade Commission works to [promote competition](#), and protect and educate consumers. You can learn more about [how competition benefits consumers](#) or [file an antitrust complaint](#). Like the FTC on [Facebook\(link is external\)](#), follow us on [Twitter\(link is external\)](#), read our [blogs](#), and [subscribe to press releases](#) for the latest FTC news and resources.