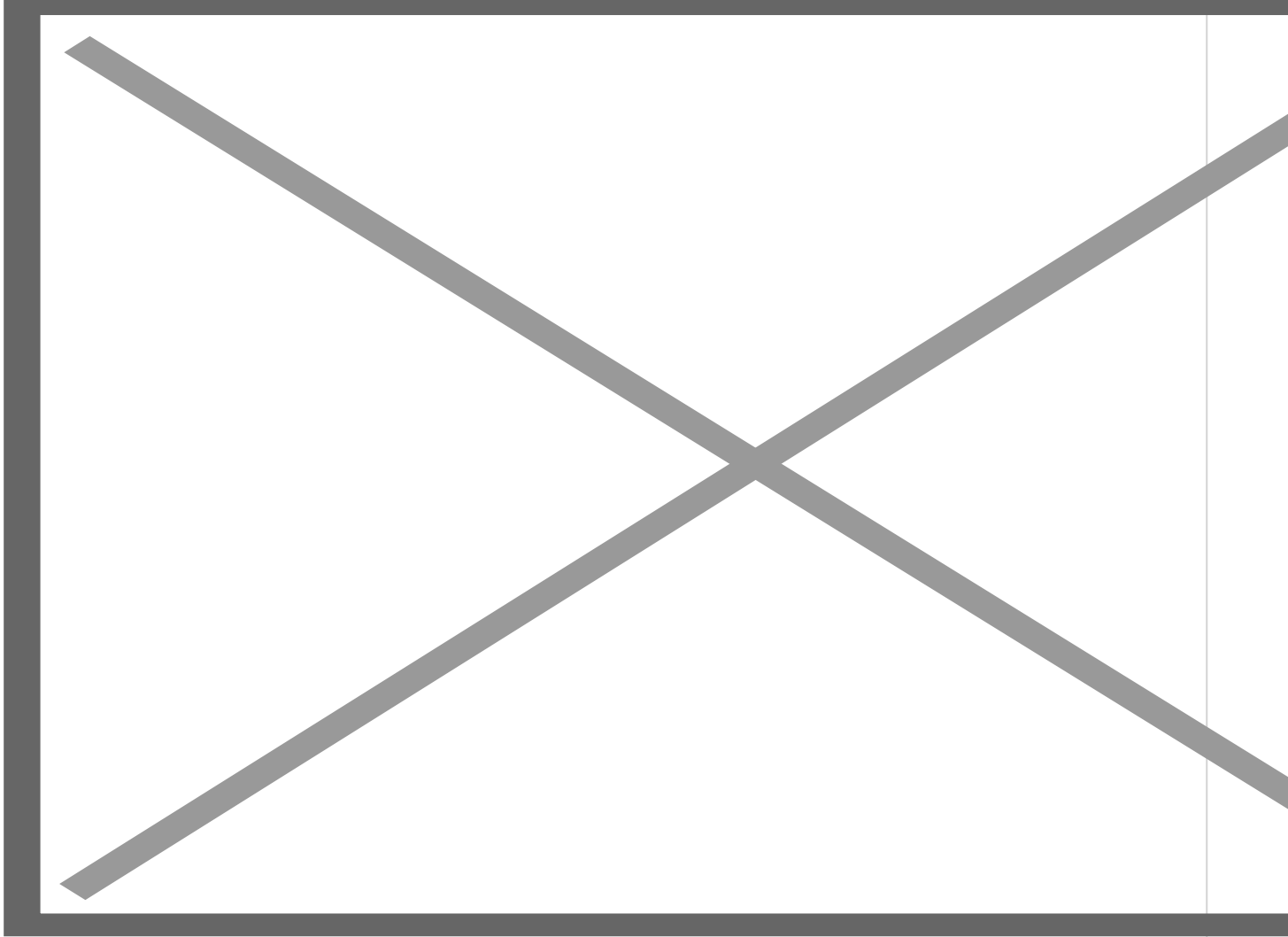


Trump's pick for attorney general accused of sex with minor, drug abuse

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U.S. Republican Representative Matt Gaetz

Washington, November 16 (RHC)-- U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's pick for attorney general to lead the Department of Justice has been accused of having inappropriate sexual relations with a minor and engagement in illicit drug abuse.

U.S. media reports said an attorney representing two women who were witnesses in the House Ethics Committee's investigation into Republican Representative Matt Gaetz is calling for the release of the committee's report, with one of his clients having testified that she had witnessed the Florida congressman "having sex with a minor."

"My client testified to the House Ethics Committee that she witnessed Matt Gaetz having sex with a minor," Florida attorney Joel Leppard told ABC News. "As the Senate considers former Rep. Gaetz's nomination for attorney general, several questions demand answers. Democracy demands transparency. Release the Gaetz ethics report," Leppard said. "What if multiple credible witnesses provided evidence of behavior that would constitute serious criminal violations?"

Asked about Leppard's comments, a spokesperson for Gaetz told ABC News: "Merrick Garland's DOJ [Department of Justice] cleared Matt Gaetz and didn't charge him. Are you alleging Garland is part of a cover-up?"

Hakeem Jeffries, the minority leader of the House, signaled his support for the report's release and quoted the adage that, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant." "In a democracy, transparency is always the best course of action, particularly when it relates to high-ranking government officials," Jeffries said.

The House Ethics Committee has been investigating for months whether Gaetz, who is to serve as one of the highest-ranking law enforcement officers in the US, engaged in sexual misconduct and drug abuse. GOP House Speaker Mike Johnson has resisted calls to release the report examining allegations against Gaetz, stressing that he will "strongly request" the committee not to release its report.

Allegations of sexual misconduct have fueled the controversy surrounding Gaetz's nomination for the post. The Department of Justice, itself, launched a nearly three-year investigation into Gaetz, though it ultimately chose not to pursue charges.

The 42-year-old Republican faces what is expected to be a contentious Senate confirmation proceeding in 2025 to decide whether his nomination will pass.

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