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# Kathleen Kane, Pennsylvania Attorney General, Is Suspended From Practicing Law

by JON HURDLE and ERIK ECKHOLM    SEPT. 21, 2015

PHILADELPHIA — The ability of Pennsylvania’s embattled attorney general to carry out her job was thrown into question Monday as the State Supreme Court issued a temporary suspension of her law license.

The attorney general, Kathleen G. Kane, 49, is facing a battery of criminal charges, accused of leaking grand jury information to embarrass political enemies and then committing perjury, obstruction and other crimes in a cover-up.

Ms. Kane, a Democrat, has denied the charges and said on Monday that she would not step down. But some Democratic politicians have joined Republican leaders in calling on her to do so.

Ms. Kane was seen as a rising Democratic star when she was elected in 2012, after a campaign in which she accused her predecessor of moving too slowly to indict and arrest Jerry Sandusky, the Pennsylvania State University assistant football coach who was convicted that year on dozens of counts of child abuse.

She was both the first woman and the first Democrat to be elected attorney general in Pennsylvania since the office became elective in 1980.

But she quickly became mired in vicious disputes with some former top prosecutors, with charges flying back and forth about cases mishandled or improperly dropped. As she re-examined the handling of the Sandusky case, her investigators also discovered that numerous officials in the attorney general’s office and other state agencies had shared

pornographic and racially offensive emails, a Supreme Court justice was forced to resign as a result.

But in August, the Montgomery County district attorney charged Ms. Kane with illegally leaking information to the news media about grand jury proceedings in a 2014 case, then lying about it. That case had involved former state prosecutors with whom she was feuding.

Ms. Kane has also clashed with Philadelphia's Democratic district attorney, R. Seth Williams, who has employed two former deputy attorneys general with whom she has traded accusations. Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, has previously called on her to resign, saying that he has not judged her innocence or guilt but that she would be impaired in her performance by such a heavy legal cloud. His spokesman, Jeffrey Sheridan, said Monday only that "We are reviewing the order."

Adding to the pressures on Ms. Kane, Representative Steve Santarsiero, a Democrat, called Monday for Ms. Kane's immediate resignation in light of the Supreme Court order and the serious charges she faces.

"Attorney General Kane has a right to due process," Mr. Santarsiero said in a statement. "But her right to defend herself against criminal charges has to be separated from the need to have a chief prosecutor who can fully perform her duties."

In refusing to leave office, Ms. Kane has said she is the victim of a vendetta by an "old boys' network" of political and legal rivals.

In Monday's ruling the State Supreme Court, acting on a recommendation from a legal disciplinary board, voted unanimously to suspend Ms. Kane's law license.

In a brief statement, the court also said that its order "should not be construed" as removing Ms. Kane "from elected office."

But the State Constitution says that the office of attorney general is open only to members of the bar, creating an uncertain situation.

"What can she do administratively?" asked G. Terry Madonna, director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin and Marshall College. "Can she hire and fire employees? Appoint a temporary A.G. to sign legal documents?"

In a written statement on Monday, Ms. Kane said that while she was "disappointed in the court's action," she was grateful that the court had specifically recognized her

Pressing her message, she said that she would continue to “root out the culture of misogyny and racially/religiously offensive behavior that has permeated law enforcement and members of the judiciary in the commonwealth for years.”

Republican legislators have said that they are studying the possible use of a little-known provision in state law, which holds that officials can be removed by the governor “for reasonable cause” with the vote of two-thirds of the Senate.

Ousting her using that provision would require the agreement of at least several Democratic senators, in a body that consists of 30 Republicans and 20 Democrats.

Drew Crompton, general counsel to the State Senate Republicans, said the provision, which was written in the late 19th century, had never been used but that Ms. Kane’s situation presented unusual new challenges.

“Having an attorney general charged with perjury is a significant event,” he said.

***Correction: September 24, 2015***

Because of an editing error, an article on Tuesday about a decision by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to temporarily suspend the law license of the state’s attorney general, Kathleen G. Kane, misstated, in some copies, the number of Democratic state senators who would have to agree for her to be ousted under state law. It is several, not “more than a dozen.”

Jon Hurdle reported from Philadelphia, and Erik Eckholm from New York.

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