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To: "[REDACTED] (USANYS)" <[REDACTED]>, "[REDACTED] (USANYS)" <[REDACTED]>
Cc: [REDACTED] (USANYS) [Contractor]" <[REDACTED]>
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3 Names To Watch As Biden Mulls Next SDNY Top Prosecutor

By [Pete Brush](#)

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Law360, New York (February 10, 2021, 5:41 PM EST) -- President Joe Biden is ramping up the process of choosing new top federal prosecutors across the country, and while he may not rush to replace Manhattan U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss, lawyers have their eye on a handful of her potential successors.

The application process to helm the [U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York](#), a process that court-watchers say is active and includes a large pool of candidates, comes as the Biden administration begins the work of replacing U.S. attorneys appointed by former President Donald Trump, who have all been [asked to step down](#).

But the president may not hurry to replace Strauss, who in December was [formally appointed](#) as U.S. attorney by federal judges amid the chaos of the outgoing Trump administration.

Strauss, who of late has brought high-profile cases including sex-abuse charges against

Jeffrey Epstein associate [Ghislaine Maxwell](#) and ex-fashion executive [Peter Nygard](#), is well-regarded, and her presence leaves the White House the luxury of taking its time on [SDNY](#) if it wishes to prioritize dozens of other districts across the country.

"She has a stellar reputation inside and outside the office," Pace Law School professor Bennett L. Gershman said of Strauss.

Nevertheless the application process is underway in the Southern District, sources said, with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., holding powerful sway over the process. Asked to handicap top possible successors, lawyers named three people:

Damian Williams

Damian Williams is a veteran SDNY prosecutor who heads the district's Securities and Commodities Fraud Task Force. He prosecuted [former politicians](#) Sheldon Silver and Chris Collins in recent years, and is widely regarded as a steadying presence inside the halls at 1 St. Andrew's Plaza.

Williams, who would be the first Black person to head the office, is a former law clerk for D.C. Circuit Judge Merrick B. Garland, Biden's nominee for attorney general who is slated for a Feb. 22 confirmation hearing in the Senate.

The Garland clerk chain, dozens strong, could be fertile ground for possible picks,

lawyers said, on the theory that a pre-existing relationship with the man who likely will lead Biden's Department of Justice could be valuable.

Katherine Goldstein

A white collar partner at [Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP](#), Katherine Goldstein is a former SDNY Securities and Commodities Fraud Task Force chief with a [sharp legal mind](#) who has worked on modernizing and improving insider trading enforcement. She has handled a number of high-profile white collar fraud cases.

After Strauss and Mary Jo White, who held the post from 1993 until 2002, Goldstein would be the third woman to take the job in its more-than 200 year history, if confirmed.

Anjan Sahni

Like Williams and Goldstein, Anjan Sahni, a WilmerHale white collar partner, is a former SDNY Securities and Commodities Fraud Task Force chief.

Sahni, who is of South Asian descent, also is noted for his work on a defense team that [won acquittal](#) for [Citigroup](#) trader Rohan Ramchandani in a closely-watched forex-rigging criminal trial.

Williams, Goldstein and Sahni are all said to be friendly with, and have professional ties to, former Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, who was [fired](#) by the Trump

administration in 2017. Sources said Bharara has a direct line to Schumer as the application process unfolds.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.