



Sharyl Attkisson leads Loretta Lynch witness list as Senate Republicans plan tough hearing

By Susan Ferrechio

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Senate Republicans have assembled a potentially unfriendly witness list — including a former CBS reporter who is suing the Justice Department over computer hacking — for the confirmation hearing of President Obama’s nominee for U.S. attorney general.

For the first time in eight years, Republicans will run a Senate confirmation hearing. Beginning Wednesday, they plan to lead the Senate Judiciary Committee’s questioning of Loretta Lynch, whom Obama has selected to succeed Attorney General Eric Holder.

But Lynch, currently serving as the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, is just part of the lineup. Republicans have summoned witnesses who have been highly critical of current Attorney General Eric Holder and his department.

Investigative journalist Sharyl Attkisson leads the list of witnesses who will testify at the confirmation hearing. Attkisson is suing the Justice Department, accusing it of tapping her phones and computer while she worked as a correspondent for CBS News.

Milwaukee Sheriff David A. Clarke will also testify. Clarke accused Holder of race-baiting following the shooting of an unarmed black teenager in Ferguson, Mo.

Senate Republicans have also invited Catherine Engelbrecht, who was subjected to numerous federal investigations and repeated questioning by the Internal Revenue Service after she sought tax-exempt status for her voter ID advocacy group, True the Vote, in 2010.

Among the agencies who began suddenly probing Engelbrecht’s business were the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, which are part of the Justice Department.

George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley will also testify. He authored a critical column in USA Today entitled “Fire Eric Holder.” Turley said Holder’s Justice

Department had violated civil liberties and the free press by snooping into the computers and phones of reporters.

The witness list includes some Lynch supporters, including the Reverend Doctor Clarence Newsome and Janice K. Fedarcyk, a retired FBI assistant director and friend of Lynch who worked with the nominee in New York City.

Other witnesses include Washington University School of Law professor Stephen H. Legomsky and Georgetown Law professor Nicholas Quinn Rosenkranz, who is also a constitutional scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute.

Lynch is likely to be confirmed. The confirmation process, however, will give GOP lawmakers a chance to air their discontent with how the Justice Department has functioned under Holder, whom Republicans have labeled as polarizing and unwilling to cooperate with Congress.