

## **Retirement Law Causing Exodus of Top FBI Talent**

An exodus of top-level talent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has been triggered by a law that established a mandatory retirement age of 55 for federal law enforcement officers.

Some examples: Richard E. Long, one of 11 assistant directors of the FBI, recently retired at age 52. Another assistant director, William L. Bailey, retired on Aug. 9, his 50th birthday.

The law has hastened the departure of agents closely associated with the late J. Edgar Hoover, long-time director of the Bureau. The trend has enabled the current director, William H. Webster, to mold a "new FBI." But there is a growing concern in Congress and the Bureau itself that the law may be needlessly depriving the FBI of the skills and talents of experienced agents and administrators.

Neil J. Welch, who directed the Bureau's New York office before he retired at 53 last May, said the law has had a "catastrophic effect on the leadership ranks" of the agency. Welch added: "The experience level is nowhere near what it used to be."

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