

UNITED STATES

# The Gonzales Legacy

BY MASSIMO CALABRESI  
AND BRIAN BENNETT

**I**F THERE IS A LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM the disgrace of Alberto Gonzales, it is that placing loyalty above judgment can be a hazardous thing. When newly elected Texas Governor George W. Bush pulled Gonzales from a Houston law firm in 1994 to make him general counsel, the future President was looking for a legal bodyguard. He got one who would protect his interests for the next 13 years. In 1996, Gonzales helped get Bush excused from the jury in a drunk-driving case that could have forced the Governor to disclose a 1976 arrest. From 2001 to 2005, he filled the role of White House counsel and transcriber of controversial Executive Orders. And as Attorney General, Gonzales allowed the use of political criteria in hiring career attorneys, a move that even those involved admitted “crossed the line.”

His record can be seen as part of the historic lesson, demonstrated from Nixon onward, that what a President really needs is not a fixer but a true legal counselor. Gonzales’ excessive loyalty has led to congressional investigations, repeated rebukes by the Supreme Court and showdowns with Congress over the extent of Executive power. Those battles will continue to rage even after Gonzales has returned to Texas and hung his souvenir pictures on the wall. ■

