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STATE

13 attorneys general seek intervention in Hewlett-Packard merger, alleging 'backroom dealings'

The motion comes amid allegations that the Trump administration has been using the DOJ to do his bidding.

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The top lawyers, including Rob Bonta, from California and other states want to participate directly in the investigation of Hewlett-Packard Enterprise's acquisition. | Noah Berger/AP

SACRAMENTO, California — Thirteen Democratic attorneys general are seeking to intervene in the merger of two major tech companies following a proposed settlement from the U.S. Department of Justice, which had originally sued to block the deal over antitrust concerns.

What happened: The top lawyers from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, New York, Oregon, Washington state, Wisconsin and the District of Columbia filed the motion Tuesday, aiming to participate directly in the investigation of Hewlett-Packard Enterprise's acquisition of wireless provider Juniper Networks. The merits of the DOJ's settlement are currently being evaluated by U.S. District Judge Casey Pitts, a Joe Biden-appointee in San Jose, California.

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"If this merger settlement goes through without scrutiny, it could harm competition, reduce choices for businesses, and drive up costs for critical technology infrastructure," California Attorney General Rob Bonta said on Wednesday at a press conference.

"Beyond the business implications, this case raises serious questions about the integrity of government processes."

The filing alleges that public information about how and why the DOJ proposed a settlement suggests that it was not in the public interest. The filing heavily relies on a [federal law](#) from 1974 that requires the Justice Department to make antitrust settlements publicly available and have a court determine that they are in the public interest.

Why it matters: The motion comes amid accusations that the Trump administration has been [using the DOJ](#) to do his bidding as the president has [deployed the department](#) to go after his perceived enemies. U.S. Attorney General [Pam Bondi has insisted](#) that she's working to end the "weaponization" of the DOJ after Trump faced two criminal charges while Joe Biden was in office.

Bonta said the new filing is "about more than one merger."

"It's about whether the administration will continue using its authority to reward allies and protect political friends while undermining ordinary Americans and state officials who hold them accountable," Bonta said.

The White House press office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Key context: The Justice Department under Trump had initially [blocked the proposed deal](#) in January, citing competition concerns. In July, however, the department [announced that it had advised](#) the court to reach a settlement between the two companies. Axios later [reported that the DOJ](#) said the settlement was largely a result of national security concerns, and that the merger was necessary to compete with China's Huawei Technologies.

Bonta, along with 20 attorneys general from most of the states listed in the latest filing, had last month [sent a letter](#) to the DOJ opposing the deal.

What's next: U.S. District Judge Casey Pitts in San Jose, California, will rule on the motion.

Bonta said they're also going to "seek a pause in the integration of emerging parties here pending the outcome of those proceedings."