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Interim U.S. attorney for Houston named

By MARY FLOOD HOUSTON CHRONICLE

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Angel Moreno, a Laredo-based assistant U.S. attorney, has been named as the new acting U.S. attorney for the division that includes Houston.

The federal judges in the Southern District of Texas voted this week to make Moreno the replacement for U.S. Attorney Tim Johnson, who leaves at the end of the week.

President Barack Obama, now well into his second year in office, has not appointed a new U.S. attorney for any of the four Texas positions.

Johnson was appointed on an interim basis when Don DeGabrielle left in November 2008, and he became the U.S. attorney in 2009 when no one was appointed by the incoming Democrats.

"Angel Moreno has given many years of dedicated service to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas and is an excellent choice to take over as U.S. attorney," Johnson said Tuesday.

Moreno last week was in trial against an alleged Gulf Cartel enforcer on conspiracy, drug and weapons charges. He's listed on a Justice Department Web site as the chief of the Southern District Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

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Moreno graduated from the University of Texas law school in 1984. He's a former local assistant district attorney in Del Rio and Laredo and a legal counselor for then-INS border patrol agents. He's had a much-lauded career with the Justice Department since 1991, including a detail in Washington as assistant director of criminal programs.

He also served with the Justice Department in the American Embassy in Colombia, helping on a law enforcement reform project in 2001 and 2002.

Philip Hilder, a former federal prosecutor in Houston, said he went to trial against Moreno in Brownsville on the case of Juan Garza, who was later executed by the federal government.

"Moreno is an excellent selection. He's smart and methodical and will be a good people manager," Hilder said.

Johnson will be going into private practice at Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell.

The selection of his successor by the White House has been mired in a political fight for power between Texas senators and House members.

The district encompasses 43 counties and includes Houston, Galveston, Victoria, Laredo, Corpus Christi and Brownsville.

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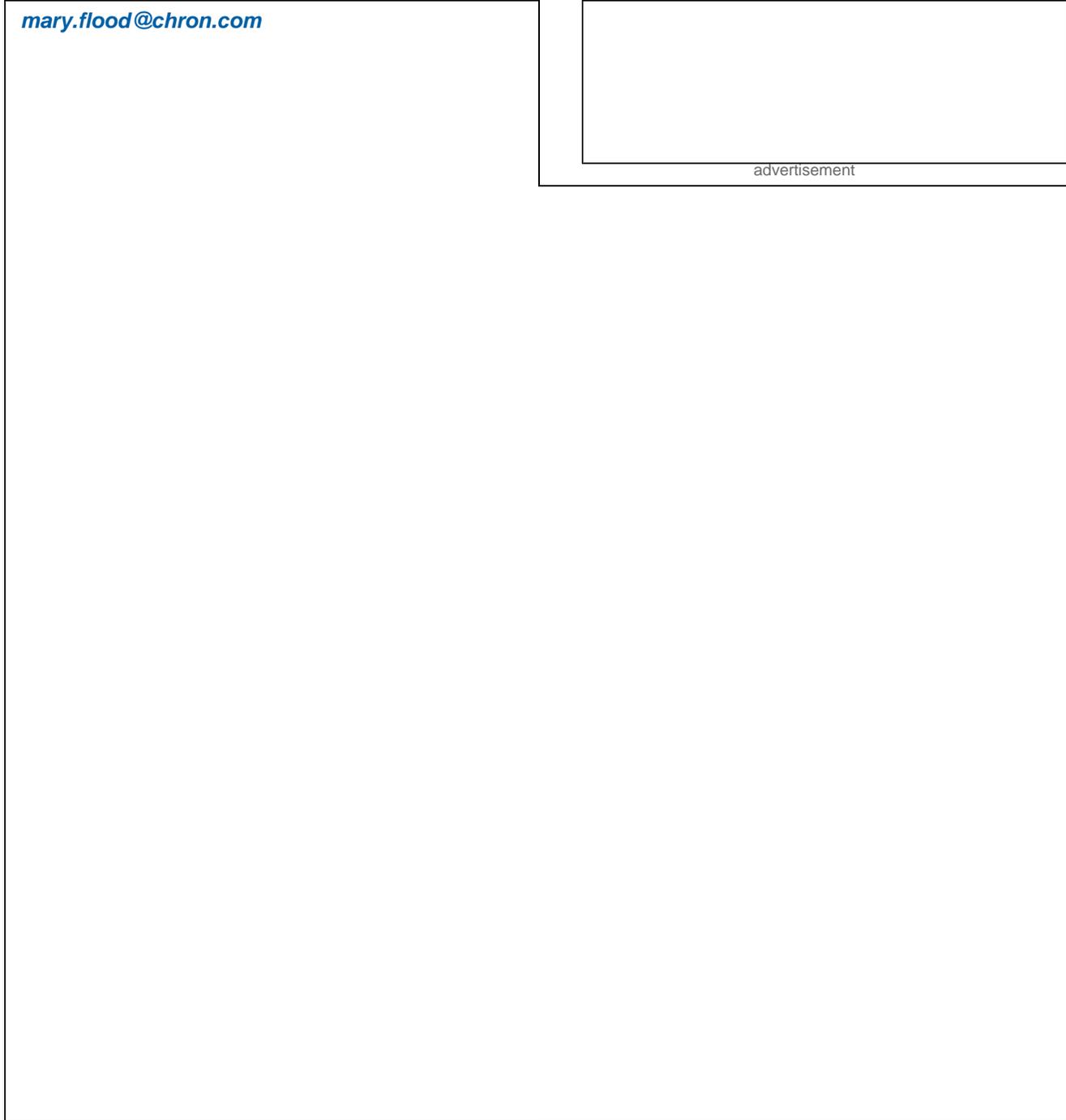


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