

September 23, 2005 4:20 p.m. EDT

WORLD NEWS

FDA Commissioner Quits

A WALL STREET JOURNAL ONLINE NEWS ROUNDUP
September 23, 2005 4:20 p.m.

Lester Crawford, the embattled commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, resigned Friday, saying in a memo to his staff that at age 67 it was time to step aside.



Lester Crawford

His resignation comes just two months after the Senate, in a long-delayed move, elevated the longtime agency deputy to the job of commissioner. He had previously served as acting FDA chief.

The agency has come under criticism for its handling of the Vioxx controversy; the popular painkiller was pulled from the market last year due to safety concerns. His resignation also comes as political controversy has intensified around the FDA's decision to delay a final ruling on the so-called Plan B emergency contraceptive.

Mr. Crawford announced last month that the agency would seek public input before making a final decision about Plan B, which is marketed by Barr Pharmaceuticals Inc. It was the latest twist for an application that was originally filed in March 2002.

Then, several weeks ago, Susan Wood, the agency's assistant commissioner for women's health, said she was stepping down from her position. She cited the FDA's deferral in deciding whether the Plan B drug, also known as the "morning-after pill," should be sold without a prescription. Her departure ramped up the political tension surrounding Plan B, as House and Senate Democrats immediately seized upon the issue.

Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt accepted Mr. Crawford's resignation "with sadness," said HHS spokeswoman Christina Pearson. "We thank him for his service and wish him well."

Asked if he was forced to resign, Ms. Pearson declined further comment, calling it a personnel issue.

Write to the Online Journal's editors at newseditors@wsj.com¹

URL for this article:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB112750510928650208,00.html>

Hyperlinks in this Article:

(1) <mailto:newseditors@wsj.com>

DOW JONES REPRINTS

◀R This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit: www.djreprints.com.

- See a sample reprint in PDF format.
- Order a reprint of this article now.

Copyright 2005 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our **Subscriber Agreement** and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com.