

WASHINGTON - Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., called Saturday for embattled U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to resign or be fired immediately.

Terry said his trust and faith in Gonzales have been "greatly diminished" as evidence has accumulated that contradicts Gonzales' assertions that he was only minimally involved in the firing of eight federal prosecutors.

"The issue is now, 'Is Gonzales a truthful person and is he capable of running the Department of Justice?'" Terry said. "Unfortunately, I don't have faith in him in either one of those areas."

Democrats have suggested that the firings of the attorneys were politically motivated. Gonzales made inaccurate statements about his role in the firings, his former chief of staff testified last week.

Gonzales is scheduled to testify before Congress in a couple of weeks.

President Bush defended Gonzales, saying Saturday that the attorney general is "honorable and honest" and has his full support.

"He is providing documents for Congress to find the truth. He will testify in front of Congress. And he will tell the truth," the president said. "I will remind you there is no credible evidence there has been any wrongdoing."

Terry said he also sees nothing nefarious behind the firings. He said Gonzales' credibility problems are self-inflicted. The fired prosecutors, after all, served at the pleasure of the president.

"They have the absolute right to fire them because it's Wednesday at noon," Terry said. "They don't need a reason."

Rep. Adrian Smith, R-Neb., said he was not ready to call for Gonzales' resignation. Smith spokesman Charles Isom said he had some concerns but

would wait to hear Gonzales' testimony.

Other lawmakers - including Republican Sens. Gordon Smith of Oregon and John Sununu of New Hampshire - have called for Gonzales to step down.

Terry suggested that more of his Republican colleagues would join the chorus and that Gonzales' ouster is inevitable.

"I got a feeling there's a lot of my GOP colleagues that feel the same way," he said in a phone interview from Nebraska .

If Gonzales refuses to leave, Terry said, Bush should help him find the door. Terry said he has heard that all Bush appointees are required upfront to write resignation letters that are kept in a file.

"They should pull Gonzales' letter out of his file and accept his resignation now," Terry said.

Gonzales has said he was aware his staff was drawing up plans for the firings . However, he said he did not recall taking part in discussions over which people would be told to go.

Terry, asked whether he believed Gonzales' accounts, said: "I don't know. . . . I don't think so. . . . I trusted him before, but I can't now."

He added, "Frankly, until these statements came out that contradicted his first statement, I was backing him, saying that he shouldn't resign. Now I think that he should."

**This report includes material from the Associated Press.**

