

Trump Transition Tracker

Updates as of 5PM EST on Thursday, November 21, 2024

Transition Updates

Matt Gaetz's withdrawal from consideration to be Attorney General could put other picks in the hot seat.

Confirmation of some of President-elect Trump's other controversial nominees, such as Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Pete Hegseth and Tulsi Gabbard, just got more difficult because GOP Senators no longer must cross Trump over Gaetz and now could potentially expend political capital opposing other picks. Keep an eye out for where Gaetz lands. Senate confirmation is not required for a White House "advisor" position in the West Wing.

Continuing concern over recess appointments. Trump and Congress could be hurtling towards a constitutional showdown even with Gaetz's withdrawal, as Trump has made clear he would attempt to install any picks that the Senate blocks via recess appointments. Trump is sending a message to Washington that he is calling the shots now and that the Senate needs to fall in line. For Trump to make a recess appointment, the Senate would need to vote to go into recess for at least 10 consecutive days. Although Republicans control the Senate, Senators dislike being told what to do – especially when it concerns a backdoor appointment of a Cabinet member. Article II of the Constitution allows a president to adjourn one or both chambers of Congress under certain circumstances, including if the House and Senate disagree about when to be in session. The Republican-controlled House, which has been more friendly to Trump than the Senate, could pass an adjournment resolution. If the Senate refuses to accept it, Trump could use executive powers to send Congress into recess. The Senate, even though in Republican control, would most likely file suit and the case would head to the courts to be resolved.

The question for Trump would be whether this is a battle worth fighting, especially when he needs a unified GOP Senate to help deliver on his agenda to cut taxes, secure the nation's borders, reform the immigration system and roll back the Biden administration's climate initiatives. For someone like RFK, Jr., Trump is most likely to attempt a recess appointment, though Trump's commitment to appointing Hegseth or Gabbard may not go that far.

Cabinet Spotlight: Department of Transportation Nominee Sean Duffy. Duffy, a former member of Congress from Wisconsin, should have no problem being confirmed. Expect Duffy to play an integral role in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill in 2026. He also will have discretion over the remaining infrastructure funds from President Biden's 2021 infrastructure. Some transportation watchers suspect Duffy will provide substantially fewer competitive grant funds to projects that support low-carbon transportation. Duffy is expected to play a key role in the Trump administration's efforts to scale back incentives for electric vehicles and limit funding for low carbon initiatives. The League of Conservation Voters has noted that his 2% score from the group is the lowest of any nominee so far.

Cabinet Spotlight: Department of Commerce Nominee Howard Lutnick. Lutnick, a prominent Wall Street figure and co-chair of Trump's transition team, is a staunch supporter of Trump's plan to enact aggressive trade restrictions on China covering a broad range of goods, such as electronics and steel. Like Duffy, he shouldn't have any issue getting confirmed. Remember that the Commerce Department oversees a broad array of federal policies, including on climate, semiconductors, cybersecurity and patents. It's unclear where Lutnick stands on many of these issues.

Trade, Tariffs & Investments

USTR May Be Consolidated Under Commerce: Trump's announcement of Lutnick [said](#) he would have "direct responsibility over USTR," but that is easier said than done. Notably, putting Commerce in charge would remove USTR's direct line to the president, potentially hindering its ability to implement new tariffs and trade policy.

Assertive Ambassador to Canada: Trump [picked](#) former Michigan Rep. Pete Hoekstra as Ambassador to Canada. Hoekstra previously served as Ambassador to the Netherlands during Trump's first term. Hoekstra could press Canada to increase its defense spending to be in line with NATO's 2% commitment and oppose Chinese investment in Canada to prevent it from being used as a "backdoor" to the U.S. market.

Health Care

Dr. Oz's Evolving Views on Insurance Coverage: Trump's choice to run the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, celebrity Dr. Mehmet Oz, in 2020 [voiced support](#) for a "Medicare Advantage for all" plan that would eliminate private insurance and expand government-run health care. However, since his 2022 Pennsylvania Senatorial campaign, Oz has [supported](#) more typical Republican positions around privatization but took a moderate stance on the Affordable Care Act. Oz's evolving views make his approach to running the agency – which sits under HHS and runs Medicaid, Medicare, the ACA and Child Health Insurance Programs, among others – hard to predict. Oz also faces similar – if less severe – criticisms as RFK Jr. for promoting debunked health treatments.

Technology

Executive Order on AI 'Manhattan Project': The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, a congressional advisory body on China, released its annual report [echoing an America First Policy Institute](#) proposal that [called](#) for a "Manhattan Project-like" AI initiative to stay ahead of China's technological advancements. Certain members of the commission overlap with the Trump transition team, and the report could indicate how Trump will approach a new AI framework.

Trump May Appoint Cryptocurrency Czar: The Trump team is [considering](#) creating a new White House post solely dedicated to cryptocurrency policy and are actively vetting candidates to serve in such a role. Trump's appointment of a [new SEC Chair](#) will likely impact the position's relevance, and it is unclear if position will have a direct link to Trump or be a policy "czar."

Latest Trump Appointments

Ambassador to Canada

Pete Hoekstra

CMS Administrator

Dr. Mehmet Oz

U.S. Ambassador to NATO

Matthew Whitaker

Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs

James Braid

Secretary of Education

Linda McMahon

Two and a half weeks after the election, Trump only has a handful of cabinet-level appointments left to announce, among them are Treasury, Agriculture, Labor, USTR, and now Attorney General again.

Links to Additional APCO Resources

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