

Trump Transition Tracker

Updates as of 5 PM EST Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Transition Updates

Trump doubles down on campaign promises. President-elect Donald Trump's "Meet the Press" [interview](#) over the weekend reinforced that he is 100% committed to implementing his campaign promises. He vowed to move immediately to crack down on immigration, saying he would aim to deport millions of undocumented immigrants and try to end birthright citizenship. He reiterated his plans to impose tariffs on trading partners such as Mexico and Canada. He said he would pardon the January 6 rioters. He also said the members of the January 6 Commission should be jailed. Trump believes the results of the November 5 election are a mandate for change, and he plans to push as hard and as far as he can to change how Washington operates.

CEOs on board. While some economists have expressed concern about Trump's proposals, America's top chief executives [appear](#) confident that Trump will bring about an era of low taxes and deregulation. Results from the latest Business Roundtable economic outlook index jumped 12 points from last quarter to the highest level in more than two years. According to the outlook, leaders feel "energized," with Washington set to "consider measures that can protect and strengthen tax reform, enable a sensible regulatory environment, and drive investment and creation." APCO continues to believe as long as the economy remains strong, Trump will have latitude with the business community to implement his policies.

"THIS IS NOT OUR FIGHT." Trump's recent [X post](#) on the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship in Syria should not come as a surprise and reinforces his non-interventionist stance on the Middle East. During his first term, Trump sought to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria. He was ultimately dissuaded from removing all U.S. troops by his advisors, given their concerns over ISIS activity, but did withdraw some. However, Trump's decision to kill Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps General Qasem Suleimani in Iraq in 2020 shows he remains open to escalation in the region. With Iran seemingly weakened, the hawks in Trump's Cabinet may urge him to press America's advantage instead of disengaging. Trump's flexibility in his regional approach makes it unclear how he will ultimately proceed with respect to Iran.

Future of USTR remains unclear. There are still questions around whether the value of USTR will be diminished under Trump II. Trump first announced before nominating anyone to the post that USTR could lose its Cabinet level position and be placed under the direction of the Commerce Department instead. The uncertainty is notable given USTR's instrumental role in implementing Trump's tariff agenda, specifically the Section 301 tariffs which kicked off the U.S.-China trade war in Trump's first administration and will likely be key to his effort this time around. Further muddying the waters is Trump's decision to nominate Jamieson Greer as USTR, passing over his first term USTR Robert Lighthizer. Staunchly pro-tariff Greer is Lighthizer's protégé, but his nomination indicates that Lighthizer himself has been passed over for a Cabinet appointment for unknown reasons.

Cabinet Spotlight: Secretary of Health & Human Services Nominee Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. RFK Jr., a known skeptic of science, medicine, and vaccines, supports the "Make America Healthy Again" [agenda](#), which is also endorsed by Trump. RFK Jr. attributes many of the nation's health problems to pharmaceutical and food companies, alleging collusion with HHS and the Agriculture departments. Kennedy and other nominees set to lead agencies within HHS have proposed overhauling the health system, including firing employees, eliminating certain FDA centers and shifting NIH research focus from infectious diseases to chronic diseases. RFK Jr.'s selection is unconventional and could cause disruption and confusion across the health sector. This week, a group of 77 Nobel Prize laureates wrote a [letter](#) to the Senate urging them to block Kennedy's nomination based on his lack of medical or scientific credentials. Given HHS's status as the largest federal agency by spending and its strong constituencies in Congress and nationwide, the extent of change Kennedy can implement is uncertain, and his confirmation is not a sure bet. It

is unclear how much support RFK Jr. has within the Republican Caucus due to previous positions on abortion and most, if not all, Democrats are expected to oppose him. While the anti-vaccine groups will support him, many public health groups and [organizations will vocally oppose](#) his nomination. Read APCO's additional analysis on his nomination and others within HHS [here](#).

Trade, Tariffs & Investments

Trump says he “can’t guarantee” tariffs won’t raise costs. In an interview with NBC over the weekend, Trump [said](#) he “can’t guarantee” that tariffs won’t raise costs for Americans, though he said he didn’t believe economists’ predictions that tariffs would cause inflation. Trump added that “I can’t guarantee tomorrow,” indicating that while he stands by his tariff agenda he does not want to be pinned down as promising a certain outcome in an unpredictable world.

Canada will retaliate. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [said](#) that Canada would respond should Trump place “unfair tariffs” on the country. Trudeau said U.S. tariffs “would be devastating” to the Canadian economy but cited Canada’s “response” – i.e. its own retaliatory tariffs on steel and aluminum – as the decisive factor in getting tariffs lifted during Trump’s first administration. Overnight last night, Trump [referred](#) to Trudeau as “Governor” of the “Great State of Canada,” further prodding Trudeau after previously joking that Canada ought to become the 51st state.

Perdue pivots to hawk: Former Senator David Perdue’s (R-GA) September [op-ed](#) saying China and the U.S. are locked in a “New War” for global freedom is getting renewed attention since Purdue was nominated as Ambassador to China. Perdue argued that China is plotting to usurp the U.S. as global hegemon by upending the Bretton Woods institutions and “[converting] the world to Marxism.” Perdue’s bellicose rhetoric is a shift from his business-oriented posture in years past and could lead to deep skepticism when he arrives in Beijing. However, it cements Trump’s hardline approach to China.

Regulation & Deregulation

Time runs short for TikTok. Last Friday, a three-judge panel of the District Court of Appeals [upheld](#) the law requiring the divestiture of TikTok in the U.S. by January 19 or face a ban. After the decision, TikTok filed an emergency [injunction](#) to temporarily block the law from going into effect in January, which they argued would “create breathing room for the Supreme Court to conduct an orderly review and for the incoming administration to evaluate this matter,” implying that they believe Trump will pause enforcement of the Act or otherwise mitigate its most severe potential consequences. Next up: does the Supreme Court grant TikTok’s appeal and provide injunctive relief? Also worth [watching](#): does China use the TikTok sale as a bargaining chip in future trade negotiations?

Technology

China fires back at U.S. chip restrictions. In response to sweeping new U.S. restrictions on advanced chip exports to China, government authorities in Beijing have opened an antitrust investigation into Nvidia, the Silicon Valley-based global market leader in AI chips. The probe is mainly focused on Nvidia’s acquisition of the Israel-based chip company Mellanox Technologies. The targeting of the U.S. top national chip champion marks a significant escalation in the U.S.-China tech trade war.

Trump and Vice President-elect JD Vance compromised in suspected Chinese hack. U.S. officials are scrambling to assess the fallout from the [ongoing](#) Salt Typhoon hack, which is widely considered to be the worst hacking incident in U.S. history. This state-backed breach, suspected to be orchestrated by China, compromised critical U.S. telecommunications networks, including those of Verizon and AT&T. Crucially, the hack compromised Foreign

Intelligence Surveillance telecoms backdoors used for court-ordered monitoring and intelligence surveillance, allowing virtually unlimited access to the online activities of users on those networks. The hack allowed persistent access to sensitive communications of senior government officials and political figures, including Trump and Vance. The personal targeting of Trump raises the temperature of U.S.-China relations moving into the second Trump Administration, which is already expected to be unprecedentedly hawkish on China issues. This may impact any U.S. trade negotiations and bilateral diplomacy.

Latest Trump Appointments

Deputy Secretary of State

Christopher Landau

U.S. Ambassador to China

David Perdue

Click [here](#) for an inventory of senior staff announcements. Ordered reverse chronologically by official [announcement](#).

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