



Brief Biodata of the Members of President Elect Donald Trump's Cabinet

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President Elect Donald J. Trump and his transition team has the task of filling in over 4000 federal government positions including some of the most important positions in the US government. Over the past few weeks he has announced some of the nominations for the position of key offices of the government and the White House. While the staff selected for the White House would not need Senate confirmation¹, other cabinet positions would need confirmation from the Senate.

The paper is an overview of some of the key cabinet position nominees.

White House Staff

- 1) **The Chief of Staff²- Mr. Reince Priebus-** Mr. Priebus is the longest serving director of the Republican National Committee since 2011. Previously, he served as the committee's general counsel. In his first term as Chairman, Mr. Reince oversaw a dramatic turnaround of the RNC, rescuing its finances, rebuilding the operations and implementing the best ground game effort the RNC had ever organized. In his second term as Chairman, he made a commitment to taking the party's message of freedom and economic opportunity to all states and all communities. By welcoming new voices and voters and harnessing the power of new technology, Mr. Reince led the RNC in building the infrastructure needed for a landslide GOP victory in the midterm elections. Reince has a long history in Republican politics as a grassroots volunteer. He worked his way up through the ranks of the Republican Party of Wisconsin as 1st Congressional District Chairman, State Party Treasurer, First Vice Chair, and eventually State Party Chairman. In 2009, Mr. Reince served as General Counsel to

the RNC, a role in which he volunteered his time to help manage the RNC's most difficult challenges.³ He shares a close relationship with Speaker Paul Ryan.

- 2) **National Security Advisor- Lt. Gen Michael Flynn-** Lt. Gen. Flynn graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1981 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in Military Intelligence. Since then, he has served in a variety of command and staff positions. Lt. Gen Flynn has served as the director of the Defence Intelligence Agency from 2012-2014. He's also served as assistant director of National Intelligence and served in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴ While the position does not need Congressional approval, however, Lt. Gen Flynn who retired in 2014, would need to be granted a waiver by the US Congress. By law, military officers must be out of uniform for at least seven years before they are eligible to become secretary of defense, though it is possible that Congress could grant a waiver that would allow Lt. Gen. Flynn to be named to that post. Lt. Gen Flynn's record with classified information has been called into question during his military career. On at least two occasions, his handling of classified information came under scrutiny by the US military.
- 3) **Homeland Security Advisor-Mr. Thomas P. Bossert-**A position that will be equal in status to national security adviser, it will focus on homeland security and counterterrorism. Mr. Bossert is the president of Civil Defense Solutions, a risk management consulting firm in Washington and is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council research institution, working on its Cyber Statecraft Initiative. He previously served as deputy assistant to the President for Homeland Security, where he advised President Bush on homeland security, counterterrorism, and continuity of operations, and coordinated the US government's homeland security and counterterrorism policies.⁵
- 4) **Senior Advisor- Mr. Stephen Bannon-** Mr. Bannon was part of the Trump campaign. He is a businessman, and media executive. He became chief executive officer of the 2016 presidential campaign of Mr. Trump in August 2016. Mr. Bannon is also the head of the controversial website called Breitbart which has been criticised for its right wing content and supporting conspiracy theories like questioning Hillary Clinton's health. They have also been major proponents of Trump's border wall proposal. In what has further caused some questions is the fact that Mr. Trump has stated that Mr. Bannon would be equal to his chief of staff.
- 5) **Director of Trade and Industrial Policy- Dr. Peter Navarro-** A new position that will oversee trade and industrial policy. Dr. Navarro received his PhD in economics from Harvard University and is a business professor at The Paul Merage School of Business, University of California-Irvine. His internationally recognised expertise lies in his "big picture" application of a highly sophisticated but easily accessible macroeconomic analysis of the business environment and financial markets for investors and corporate executives. He has written ten books, most recently Death by

China, Seeds of Destruction, Always a Winner, and the bestselling The Coming China Wars.⁶

Federal Staff

- 1) **Secretary of State- Mr. Rex Tillerson-** Mr. Tillerson, the head of Exxon Company since 2006, earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering at the University of Texas at Austin before joining Exxon Company, U.S.A. in 1975 as a production engineer. Mr. Tillerson is a member of the executive committee and a former chairman of the American Petroleum Institute. He is also a member of the Society of Petroleum Engineers and a trustee of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is a member of the National Petroleum Council, a member of the Business Roundtable, a member of the Business Council, an honorary trustee of the Business Council for International Understanding, and a member of the Emergency Committee for American Trade. In 2013, he was awarded the Order of Friendship by Vladimir Putin, president of the Russian Federation.⁷
- 2) **Secretary of Defence-General James Mattis-** Gen. Mattis retired in 2013 after a 41-year Marine Corps career that included field commands in the Persian Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2007 he was appointed as the head US Joint Forces Command and Nato Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. and to replace General David Petraeus at the helm of U.S. Central Command in 2010, with responsibility for ongoing U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since retiring, Gen. Mattis, has been a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and taught courses on various subjects at other colleges nationwide. For Gen. Mattis to be appointed, Congress would need to waive a federal requirement that candidates for defence secretary must not have been on active duty in the previous seven years.⁸
- 3) **Secretary of Homeland Security-General John Kelly-**Gen. Kelly was born and raised in Boston, MA. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1970. Lt.Gen Kelly commanded Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces North from October 2009 to March 2011. General Kelly joined the United States Southern Command from his previous position as the Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defence from March 2011 to October 2012. ⁹He played a central role in largely destroying al-Qaida in western Iraq and later became senior military adviser to then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates.¹⁰
- 4) **Secretary of Energy- Mr. Rick Perry-** Mr. Perry was governor of Texas from 2000 until 2015, making history as the longest-serving governor of the state. He ran two failed bids for president in 2012 and 2016. In 1984, Mr. Perry was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. As a Democrat, he served three two-year terms in office. In 1988, Perry supported Al Gore in the Democratic presidential primaries and chaired the Gore campaign in Texas. In 1989, Mr.Perry announced that he was switching to the Republican Party. Between 1972 and 1977, Perry served in the U.S. Air Force flying

C-130 tactical airlift aircraft in Europe and the Middle East. He is a lifetime member of both the National Rifle Association of America (NRA) and American Legion Post #75. Prior to being elected Lieutenant Governor in 1998, he served two terms as Texas Commissioner of Agriculture and three terms in the Texas House of Representatives.¹¹

- 5) **Environmental Protection Agency- Mr.Scott Pruitt-** In 2010, Mr. Pruitt became the second Republican in Oklahoma history to serve as Attorney General. He was elected to public office in 1998 when he won a seat in the State Senate. As Attorney General, he has led Oklahoma's legal challenges to ObamaCare, President Obama's executive actions on illegal immigration, the EPA's intrusion into property rights etc.¹²
- 6) **Attorney General- Senator Jeff Sessions (R. Alabama)** –Mr. Sessions was born in Selma, Alabama the son of a country store owner. He served in the United States Army Reserve from 1973 to 1986 ultimately attaining the rank of Captain. Mr. Sessions was nominated by President Reagan in 1981 and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the United States Attorney for Alabama's Southern District, a position he held for 12 years. Sessions was elected Alabama Attorney General in 1995, serving as the state's chief legal officer until 1997, when he entered the United States Senate. As a United States Senator, Mr. Sessions has focused his energies on maintaining a strong military, upholding the rule of law, limiting the role of government, and providing tax relief to stimulate economic growth and empowering Americans to keep more of their hard-earned money. A strong environmentalist, Sessions was responsible for legislation that created the newest addition to the National Wildlife Refuge system, the Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge near Anniston.¹³
- 7) **US Ambassador to the United Nations- Governor Nikki (Nimrata) Haley-** Governor Haley, the 116th Governor of South Carolina, is the first female and the first minority governor in South Carolina history and currently the youngest governor in the country. She was re-elected to a second term in November 2014.¹⁴ Prior to becoming governor, she represented Lexington County in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 2005 to 2011. If confirmed by the Senate, Haley would be the first Indian American to serve in the cabinet of a presidential administration.
- 8) **Director, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-Congressman Mr. Mike Pompeo (R. Kansas)-** Mr. Pompeo is a third term congressman from the 4th District of Kansas. He served as a cavalry officer patrolling the Iron Curtain before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School. In the Congress, Mr. Pompeo serves on two major committees: Energy and Commerce, which oversees energy, health care, manufacturing, and telecommunications, and the House Intelligence Committee, which oversees America's intelligence-gathering efforts. Earlier in 2014, he was also appointed to the House Select Benghazi Committee to investigate the tragic events in Benghazi, Libya.¹⁵

Apart from Governor Nikki Haley, born in South Carolina to Sikh immigrant parents, President Elect Trump has nominated a second Indian-American woman to his incoming administration; Ms. Seema Verma is to serve as Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Ms. Verma is the President, CEO and founder of Strategic Health Policy Solutions or SVC, Inc., a national health policy consulting company. For over 20 years, Ms. Verma has worked extensively on a variety of policy and strategic projects involving Medicaid, insurance, and public health, working with Governor's offices, State Medicaid agencies, State Health Departments, State Departments of Insurance, as well as the federal government, private companies and foundations. Ms. Verma has extensive experience redesigning Medicaid programs in several states.¹⁶ There is speculation that several Indian Americans are being considered for other positions in the Trump administration over the coming days. Ms. Harmeet Dhillon, a member of the Republican National Committee, and a successful lawyer in San Francisco, is one of them. However, for the moment there has been no official announcement on other names.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of authors and do not reflect the views of the Council.

End Notes

¹ Article II, Section 2, of the US Constitution gives the president the right to negotiate foreign treaties and to nominate individuals to high-ranking government positions, including cabinet members, ambassadors, and federal judges. However, these powers are conditioned upon the advice and consent of the Senate. Section 2 requires the Senate to approve treaties by a two thirds majority, while presidential appointments require a simple majority.

² The chief of staff is the president's top adviser and assistant and manages the other assistants and advisers of the president in the West Wing and Eisenhower Executive Office Building across the street. It is the chief of staff who helps the president plan his schedule and decide where to focus his attention to be most effective in his leadership

³ National GOP Leadership, "Republican National Committee," <https://gop.com/leaders/national-chairman-reincepriebus-nt>, Accessed on 21 Dec. 2016.

⁴ Defence Intelligence Agency, "Lieutenant General Michael T. Flynn, USA," <http://web.archive.org/web/20140803211025/http://www.dia.mil/About/Leadership/ArticleView/tabid/3982/Article/6952/lieutenant-general-michael-t-flynn-usa.aspx>, Accessed on 21 Dec. 2016.

⁵ The Atlantic Council, "Tom Bossert," <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/about/experts/list/tom-bossert#fullbio>, Accessed on 29 Dec. 2016.

⁶ UCI Paul Merage School of Business, "Peter Navarro," <http://merage.uci.edu/Faculty/FacultyDirectory/FacultyProfiles.aspx?FacultyID=1589>, Accessed on 29 Dec. 2016.

⁷ Exxonmobil, "Management," <http://corporate.exxonmobil.com/en/company/about-us/management/rex-w-tillerson>, 21 Dec. 2016.

⁸ David Lauterborn, "Next Secretary of Defense? Retired Marine Corps General James Mattis," <http://www.historynet.com/interview-with-general-james-mattis.htm>, Accessed on 22 Dec. 2016.

⁹ US Department of Defence, "John F. Kelly," <https://www.defense.gov/About-DoD/Biographies/Biography-View/Article/602724/john-f-kelly>, Accessed on 22 Dec. 2016.

¹⁰ Jeff Schogol, "Retired Marine Gen. John Kelly eyed for role in Trump administration," <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/articles/retired-marine-gen-john-kelly-eyed-for-potential-trump-administration-role>, Accessed on 02 Jan. 2017.

¹¹ Perry for President, "Meet Rick Perry," <https://rickperry.org/about>, & <http://www.biography.com/people/rick-perry-20663471>, Accessed on 22 Dec. 2016.

¹² Puritt, "Scott Puritt," <http://scottpruitt.com/meet-scott/>, Accessed on 29 Dec. 2016.

¹³ United States Senator for Alabama, "Biography," <http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/biography>, Accessed on 22 Dec. 2016

¹⁴ Speaker, House of Representative, "Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina to Deliver Republican Address Following State of the Union," <http://www.speaker.gov/press-release/governor-nikki-haley-south-carolina-deliver-republican-address-following-state-union>, Accessed on 22 Dec. 2016

¹⁵ US Congressman Mike Pompeo, "Biography," <http://pompeo.house.gov/biography/>, Accessed on 29 Dec. 2016.

¹⁶ SVC Inc., "Seema Verma," <http://www.svcinc.org/our-team.html?view=employee&id=1>, Accessed on 02 Jan. 2017.