



[Trump's Picks for New Administration Positions and Potential Policy Implications](#)

Over the past week, the new incoming U.S. government has begun to take shape, with President-elect Trump announcing many of his picks for top cabinet and administration positions. Trump's second administration looks to be a marked shift from his first, featuring an array of Trump loyalists, policy hardliners, and controversial nominees with questionable credentials. Some of the picks that have raised eyebrows in particular include Matt Gaetz for Attorney General, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik for U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee for U.S. Ambassador to Israel, television presenter Pete Hegseth for U.S. Secretary of Defense, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. Trump has also designated a role for tech multimillionaire Elon Musk and former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy as part of a new presidential advisory commission. All told, analysts have expressed concern over the potential policy implications stemming from a variety of these nominations.

Former Arkansas Governor and Southern Baptist Minister Mike Huckabee has been nominated by Trump to be the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Huckabee hosts a namesake program on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), and has led visits to Israel before. His nomination for the position has been understandably criticized given that he is a staunch supporter of Israel and a fierce defender of its extremist government. Huckabee has made inflammatory statements in the past like "there's really no such thing as a Palestinian," while also praising unlawful Israeli settlements and the prospect of West Bank annexation. He has commented that there is no such thing as an illegal Israeli occupation taking place, and even recently expressed that he does not support a ceasefire in the ongoing Gaza War. Huckabee's selection as the nominee has led observers to rightly question how he could serve as an impartial broker for peace in light of all of this, especially at a time of heightened tensions and hostilities in the Middle East. Furthermore, Trump's selection for Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, is a real estate developer and donor. Back in May, when the Biden administration paused some of its bomb shipments to Israel, Witkoff led fundraisers for Trump and garnered sizable financial support from pro-Israel donors. Picking a real estate developer may have been intentional, and for some, in poor taste, drawing parallels to Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner who in the past described the "very valuable" potential of Gaza's "waterfront property."

Trump has selected Congresswoman Elise Stefanik as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. She is one of his most outspoken allies, defending him during his two impeachments, supplementing his claims regarding the 2020 election, and has fiercely supported his 2024 presidential comeback. Stefanik is well-known as a vocal defender of Israel, which came to the fore after her role in Congress' questioning of college presidents following accusations of antisemitism on campuses in December of last year. It has been argued that her skill set may not translate well to the United Nations, where carefully crafted negotiations take precedence over outspoken support and defense. Stefanik will also have to represent the U.S. amidst a time of growing international pressure under a president who is known to have frequently contradicted his international representatives. Her domestically-oriented political background may be representative of Trump's disinterest in participating in cooperative U.N. missions worldwide, a possible sign of a further retreat from the United States' leadership role and a focus instead on Trump's America First policies.

Regarding the pick of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio for Secretary of State, Rubio echoes many of Trump's foreign policy stances. He shares his skepticism for Ukrainian support and a hawkish attitude towards China and Iran due to the ongoing economic competition with China and the aggressive actions undertaken by both governments in their respective regions. Trump has called Rubio "a strong advocate for our nation, a true friend to our allies, and a fearless warrior who will never back down to our adversaries." Rubio will have a huge task ahead of him in coordinating and exacting Trump's efforts to restore peace around the globe amidst ongoing regional conflicts and the threat of potential heightened tensions with China.

Trump's choice for U.S. Secretary of Defense, Pete Hegseth, an Army National Guard veteran and Fox & Friends co-host, has stunned members of the Pentagon and put into question his capabilities for the office. Hegseth could potentially bring significant reforms to the military, as he is well known for his skepticism regarding women in combat roles and has advocated for pardoning service members charged with war crimes. He would likely serve Trump as a loyalist, which should be unsurprising, as many recall the five men who served this post under Trump in his first term. Some have speculated that this pick could lead to a significant politicization of the military and might have unprecedented repercussions regarding the reputation of the United States' armed forces abroad.

Another of Trump's picks that has particularly raised eyebrows across Washington has been Matt Gaetz for Attorney General. Both Democrats and some Republicans have voiced deep concern. Gaetz is considered a highly controversial pick for several reasons, including his staunch loyalty to Trump. Last October, Gaetz filed a motion to oust Kevin McCarthy as U.S. House Speaker, which passed, leading to anger among many House Republicans. Another area of concern is that beginning in late 2020, the Department of Justice opened an investigation into Gaetz over sex trafficking. Gaetz has always denied wrongdoing, and the case ended without any charges filed in February 2023. However, in June of this year, the House Ethics Committee announced that it had begun investigating Gaetz on [accusations](#) of drug use, child sex trafficking, and bribery. A report from the House Ethics Committee was set to be voted on, but since Gaetz resigned from the U.S. House of Representatives, it is unclear if the report can still be released.

Republican Representative Max Miller from Ohio said, "[Gaetz has a better shot at having dinner with Queen Elizabeth II than being confirmed by the Senate.](#)" John Bolton, a Republican who served as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under George W. Bush and National Security Advisor during Trump's first term, said Gaetz "[doesn't have the character.](#)" Some Republicans say they trust Trump's judgment and will support his decision; others have expressed hesitation but are willing to hear Gaetz out during a hearing before the Senate. It is clear that if Gaetz faces a vote, it will be a challenge given that the Republicans only have a 53 to 47 majority in the Senate. This tight margin to get Gaetz appointed is likely a significant reason that Trump is seeking recess appointments for his confirmation process, allowing Trump's nominations to avoid needing a vote before the Senate. Trump says recess appointments would enable him to get his cabinet up and running as fast as possible. The president-elect has voiced his desire for major reform at the Department of Justice, and Gaetz is seen as someone who can get it done and will remain loyal to him.

Trump has also tapped Kristi Noem, a Republican currently serving as South Dakota governor, as Secretary of Homeland Security. Her pick is likely due to her tough stance on immigration. She has referred to the southern border as a "warzone" and after Trump was elected, posted on X that, "[President Trump will deport the most dangerous illegal aliens first — the murderers, rapists, and other criminals that Harris and Biden let into the country.](#)" It has been theorized that she was probably also chosen for her loyalty to Trump. Noem supported Trump's efforts to file lawsuits regarding the 2020 election. During the 2024 campaign trail, she was even thought of as a possible VP pick for Trump, but that appeared to fall through over her tough stance on abortion and after controversy arose when it was revealed in her memoir that she shot and killed her dog. As head of Homeland Security, Noem would oversee the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agencies. Her cooperation would be necessary if Trump is serious about his plans for what he has called "mass deportations." Noem would also have oversight over the Secret Service, which is likely another consideration for Trump, given that he faced two assassination attempts on the 2024 campaign trail. The first attempt in Pennsylvania is considered one of the biggest failures of the Secret Service since the shooter got a clear

sight on Trump. Ultimately, Noem's nomination is a clear signal that Trump will take a stricter stance on immigration, including the use of federal agencies to seal off the border and an increase in deportations.

President-elect Trump's picks for his new administration positions show his desire for a loyal cabinet and group of officials, and consist of public supporters who have aided him in his campaign to return to the White House. His picks also indicate his policy goals, including steadfast support for Israel, toughening the U.S. stance towards China, reforming the Justice Department, and restricting immigration. Trump told Joe Rogan on his podcast that picking ["bad, disloyal people"](#) was his "biggest mistake" during his first term. Given the Republican trifecta of the presidency, House, and Senate that Trump will be working with for the first half of his term, Republican in-fighting will likely be one of the biggest challenges to his administration. The first test of Republican unity behind Trump will be if the President-elect is allowed his preferred cabinet, including his most controversial nominees.