



Meet President Trump's Cabinet of Horrors

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On the campaign trail, Donald Trump often promised his adoring throngs that if elected, he would hire "the best people" to help him run the country. Now that his cabinet is nearly filled out, we have a sense of the qualities Trump believes makes someone "the best": a vast fortune, a decorated military career and/or utter contempt for the agency they've been selected to head and the people that agency was built to serve.

At last count, Trump's proposed cabinet had a combined wealth of more than \$14.5 billion, included three generals (an **unprecedented concentration**) and at least one nominee who has twice sued the agency he's now poised to run.

Here's a peek inside Trump's cabinet of horrors.

Name: Jeff Sessions

Cabinet position: Attorney general

Net worth: \$7.5 million

Pedigree: Did stints as U.S. attorney and as attorney general of Alabama before spending two decades in the Senate.

Who wins with this pick: Immigration hawks; Sessions played a critical role in killing both congressional attempts to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Confirmation hurdles: In addition to immigration groups, Sessions has made enemies of several liberal constituencies – he received a zero out of 100 on the Human Right Campaign's LGBT issues scorecard, and an F in the one from the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, or NORML. What's more, his nomination for a federal judgeship was famously rejected by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1986 after a black assistant U.S. attorney testified Sessions called him "boy" and joked he thought Klan members were "OK, until he learned that they smoked marijuana."

Name: Mike Pompeo

Cabinet position: CIA director

Pedigree: A graduate (first in his class) of West Point and later Harvard Law School, where he was editor of the law review, Pompeo spent most of his career in the private sector before being swept into Congress amid the Tea Party wave of 2010.

Confirmation hurdles: The Kansas representative may face pushback from Senate Democrats

for his role as one of Hillary Clinton's chief antagonists on the umpteenth Benghazi investigation, but he'll easily win the support of other moderate Republicans. Trump rival and former CIA officer Evan McMullin, for one, praised the selection, calling Pompeo "a good pick for CIA. He's very smart, has already served our nation, actively seeks new information, & is strong-willed."

Name: Wilbur Ross

Cabinet position: Secretary of commerce

Net Worth: \$2.9 billion

Pedigree: A former investment banker, Ross earned the nickname "the king of bankruptcy" for buying up distressed companies in declining industries like steel, coal and textiles and turning a profit.

Confirmation hurdles: Sometimes the afore-mentioned profit came at the serious expense of workers – like in 2006, when an explosion at a mine which Ross snapped up two months earlier in Sago, West Virginia, exploded, killing 12. Ross' many financial entanglements will also face serious Senate scrutiny. He'll have to step away from his business and down from the handful of boards he sits on – including the Bank of Cyprus – as well as relinquish his investment holdings and put his assets in a blind trust.

Name: James "Mad Dog" Mattis

Cabinet position: Secretary of defense

Pedigree: A four-star general, former commander of the United States Central Command under President Obama, former commander of the United States Joint Forces Command under President Bush, former head of NATO military command.

Confirmation hurdles: Mattis left the military in 2013, which means he'll need a congressional waiver to allow him to serve as the head of the Defense Department. (In an effort to maintain civilian control of the army, current law imposes a seven-year moratorium on military personnel serving as the head of the agency.) If he gets the waiver, Mattis will still likely face questions about his relationship with the blood testing company Theranos, now under federal criminal investigation. In 2012, after the Department of Defense alerted the FDA that the company intended to distribute the test without the agency's clearance, Mattis, at the urging of Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes, **attempted to intervene** and have the complaint withdrawn. He joined the Theranos board a year later, two months after leaving the military.

Name: Betsy DeVos

Cabinet position: Secretary of education

Net worth: \$5.1 billion

Pedigree: Amway Corp. heiress, former chair of the Michigan Republican Party, and the driving force behind the failed Michigan school voucher ballot initiative.

Who wins with tis pick: Advocates of the "school choice" movement like DeVos and her husband who favor making vouchers available for poor families who choose to enroll their children in private or parochial, rather than public, schools. Many in the education community oppose such programs, as they divert critical money from already underfunded public schools.

Name: Scott Pruitt

Cabinet position: Environmental Protection Agency administrator

Pedigree: Oklahoma state senator, then Oklahoma attorney general, with failed bids for

Congress and lieutenant governor in between.

Who wins with this pick: The Koch brothers, who donated to Pruitt's campaigns in 2010, 2013 and 2014, but anyone with oil and gas interests more broadly – Pruitt has proved himself to be as staunch an ally of those industries as he is a fierce opponent to the agency itself. (He has sued the EPA twice.)

Confirmation hurdles: Pruitt, a climate denier who fought the expansion of the Clean Water Act and formed a secretive alliance with energy corporations to fight air-pollution regulations, will be loudly opposed by environmental groups. Several, including the Sierra Club and Audubon Society, have already issued strongly worded condemnations of Pruitt's nomination.

Name: Tom Price

Cabinet position: Health secretary

Net worth: \$13.6 million

Pedigree: Spent a decade representing Georgia in Congress; before that, had a career as an orthopedic surgeon and assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at Emory University.

Who wins with this pick: Opponents of Obamacare. Price, a vociferous critic the Affordable Care Act, has been plotting to dismantle the law since its passage in 2009.

Confirmation hurdles: Price will face opposition from supporters of Planned Parenthood; the nonprofit, which gave Price a zero percent rating on its latest scorecard, calls the congressman "a direct threat to women's health and rights." Price may also face questions about his affiliation with the wing-nut group the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, whose innocuous-sounding name does little to distract from the **menagerie of dangerous and dubious ideas** it advances, like the theory that vaccines cause autism, HIV does not cause AIDS and Obama may have won the presidency by hypnotizing voters. AAPS also promotes the idea that it is "evil" and "immoral" for doctors to participate in Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Name: John Kelly

Cabinet position: Secretary of homeland security

Pedigree: Former Marine, four-star general, and the head of United States Southern Command, during which time he oversaw the Obama administration's (unsuccessful) efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

Who wins with this pick: Moderates, kind of. The other high-profile candidate for the job was Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, an immigration hardliner whose nomination would undoubtedly have ignited a bitter confirmation battle.

Confirmation hurdles: Skeptics from the libertarian Cato Institute and the ACLU have raised questions about a quote from a speech Kelly delivered in 2010 deriding anti-war Americans. "If anyone thinks you can somehow thank them for their service, and not support the cause for which they fight – our country – these people are lying to themselves. ... More important, they are slighting our warriors and mocking their commitment to this nation," Kelly said.

Name: Ben Carson

Cabinet position: Secretary of housing and urban development

Net worth: \$26 million

Pedigree: Pediatric neurosurgeon, best-selling author and former Republican nominee for president who rose to prominence after criticizing President Obama at the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast.

Who wins with this pick: Critics who would delight in the agency's dissolution, perhaps.

Carson has been a vocal opponent of some of HUD's most important initiatives, like desegregating public housing, which he's called a "failed social experiment." Carson has been critical generally of social safety-net programs – e.g., rental assistance, public housing and various community development grants – saying "it's not the government's job" to take care of the needy.

Confirmation hurdles: Carson has no housing experience, and has himself scoffed at the idea of heading any government agency, saying recently, "Having me as a federal bureaucrat would be like a fish out of water, quite frankly." (House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi agrees; she called Carson a "disconcerting and disturbingly unqualified choice.") But Carson did make much of his fortune from real-estate deals, many of which were orchestrated by his "best friend," Al Costa, who pled guilty to a conspiracy to commit health insurance fraud in 2007.

Name: Elaine Chao

Cabinet position: Secretary of transportation

Net worth: \$22.2 million (with husband Mitch McConnell)

Pedigree: The daughter of a Taiwanese shipping magnate, Chao had a career in banking before a fellowship in the Reagan White House piqued her interest in public service. She went on to serve as deputy secretary of transportation under George H.W. Bush and secretary of labor under George W. Bush.

Who wins with this pick: With his wife at its helm, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell could wield an outside influence on projects – like the ballyhooed bipartisan infrastructure spending bill – overseen by the Transportation Department.

Confirmation hurdles: As a member of Wells Fargo's board of directors since 2011, Chao was responsible for monitoring the bank's actions and its leadership – meaning the buck stopped with her during the period in which the bank created millions of fake accounts, an association that could come back to haunt Chao during Senate hearings.

Name: Steven Mnuchin

Cabinet position: Treasury secretary

Net worth: \$46 million

Pedigree: Former partner at Goldman Sachs, founder of the hedge fund Dune Capital Management, co-founder of the sketchy OneWest Bank and a Hollywood producer (credits include *American Sniper* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*).

Who wins with this pick: The billionaire managers of hedge funds like Pershing Square and Paulson & Co., both of which invested in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac on the assumption that the mortgage firms would be re-privatized. The government took over both firms after bailing them out during the financial crisis, and since then it's absorbed their profits too. That would end if Mnuchin is confirmed; he has said privatizing the mortgage firms will be one of his top-ten priorities.

Confirmation hurdles: Mnuchin will undoubtedly face questions about his tenure as chairman and CEO of "foreclosure machine" OneWest Bank. Under a deal he struck with the federal government as the head of the bank, OneWest earned more than \$1 billion for orchestrating at least 36,000 foreclosures at the depth of the financial crisis.

Name: Nikki Haley

Cabinet position: Ambassador to the United Nations

Pedigree: The first woman governor of North Carolina, and current youngest governor in the

country, got her start serving six years in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Who wins with this pick: Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster – one of the earliest Trump supporters in office – who will move into the South Carolina governor's mansion upon Haley's confirmation.

Confirmation hurdles: None, really; she's likely to be confirmed with relative ease.

Name: Andy Puzder

Cabinet position: Secretary of Labor

Pedigree: CEO of CKE Restaurants, whose holdings include the Hardee's and Carl's Jr. restaurant chains.

Who wins with this pick: Fat-cat CEOs like himself, presumably. Puzder, who made \$4.5 million in 2012 (roughly 300 times the average Carl's Jr. cashier), is **astaunch opponent** of raising the minimum wage and the Obama administration's proposed overtime rules, who has also expressed a strong interest in replacing his workers by automating their jobs.

Confirmation hurdle: Labor groups, including the powerful Service Employees International Union, are not pleased and will oppose the pick. Puzder apparently also anticipates he will face questions about the fact, as reported by the St. Louis *Riverfront Times*, that he was accused of abusing his ex-wife. (A spokesman for Puzder sent the paper an email ostensibly written by his ex-wife on November 30 disavowing her past accusations and saying, "I know you would be an excellent addition to the Trump team.")

Name: Linda McMahon

Cabinet position: Administrator of the Small Business Administration

Net worth: \$1.6 billion

Pedigree: President and CEO of the WWE and twice-failed candidate for Senate in her home state of Connecticut.

Who wins with this pick: For starters, McMahon and her husband, Vince – the two largest donors to the Trump Foundation, **according to Washington Post reporter David Farenthold.**

Confirmation hurdles: When she was appointed to the Connecticut State Board of Education – she served one year, starting in 2009 – state legislators raised questions about her WWE tenure. "People jumping off ropes onto other people, it's just the wrong message," **one lawmaker commented.**

Name: Gary Cohn

Cabinet position: National Economic Council director

New worth: Unknown, but Cohn reportedly made nearly **\$20.6 million in 2015**

Pedigree: A 25-year veteran of Goldman Sachs, Cohn is now president and COO of the investment bank.

Confirmation hurdles: Sen. Bernie Sanders was quick to criticize the selection of Cohn – the third Goldman alum granted entrée to Trump's inner circle – **calling his nomination** an example of the "rigged economy."