



Trump picks Robert Lighthizer as US trade representative

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President-elect Trump on Tuesday nominated Robert Lighthizer, a former deputy U.S. trade representative under President Reagan, to serve as his U.S. trade representative.

"Ambassador Lighthizer is going to do an outstanding job representing the United States as we fight for good trade deals that put the American worker first," Trump said. "He has extensive experience striking agreements that protect some of the most important sectors of our economy, and has repeatedly fought in the private sector to prevent bad deals from hurting Americans."

"He will do an amazing job helping turn around the failed trade policies which have robbed so many Americans of prosperity," Trump added.

"I am fully committed to President-elect Trump's mission to level the playing field for American workers and forge better trade policies which will benefit all Americans," Lighthizer said.

As the administration's top trade negotiator, Lighthizer will square off with foreign governments to help the new president fulfill his campaign promises of scrapping mammoth multinational deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership in favor of striking bilateral pacts with individual countries.

Lighthizer, a well-known lawyer in Washington, interviewed with Trump in Mar-a-Lago in December. He is a partner at the prestigious law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom, and his clients have included large U.S. corporations in the heavy manufacturing, agricultural and high-tech sectors. He has also served as lead counsel in numerous anti-dumping cases.

In 2011, Lighthizer defended Trump's more protectionist trade policies in a Washington Times column.

"Mr. Trump's GOP opponents accuse him of wanting to get tough on China and of being a protectionist," he wrote. "Since when does that mean one is not a conservative?"

In choosing Lighthizer, Trump bypassed Dan DiMicco, another well-known Washington player on trade and other international business issues. Both Lighthizer and DiMicco, the former CEO and chairman of Nucor steel company, served as Trump's transition landing team leaders on trade issues.

Columnist Tim Worstall wrote that Nucor, the largest steel producer in the U.S., is at least partly responsible for creating competition in the American steel industry and pushing out traditional blast-furnace-based companies or integrated steel producers.

And the libertarian Cato Institute's Daniel Ikenson said Trump's use of both Lighthizer and DiMicco was "devastating news" to those holding out hope that Trump would moderate his campaign trade rhetoric. "Neither has met a tariff he didn't like or a trade agreement he did," Ikenson wrote.

Trump also decided against outgoing Rep. Charles Boustany, R-La., who interviewed at Trump Tower for the job. Trade reform activists backing Trump's tough U.S. approach slammed Boustany's candidacy as a repudiation of voters who crossed parties to help him win Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

"He is 180-degree opposite to where candidate Trump and pre-candidate Trump has been on trade," Michael Stamo, CEO of the Coalition for a Prosperous America told the *Washington Examiner*. "Of all the things candidate Trump talked about and evolved on through his campaign, trade reform has been the most consistent."

Boustany, who gave up his House seat to run for Senate, indicated his interest in the USTR job after failing to qualify for a Senate runoff election in Louisiana.

Boustany has been a member of the Ways and Means Committee since his election to the House in 2013, and he has backed the same spate of recent free trade agreements that Trump pilloried on the campaign trail. Boustany is a cofounder of the Friends of TPP bill, and voted in favor of fast-tracking that mammoth trade pact.