



Preparing for Change: Analyzing the Incoming Cabinet Picks of the Trump Administration and Strategic Implications for the Navajo Nation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On December 2, 2024 the Navajo Nation Washington Office (NNWO) compiled detailed biographies and analyses on the incoming Cabinet picks of the Trump administration. With Senate confirmations approaching in January, this initiative aims to provide Navajo leaders with insights into the nominees' backgrounds, prior work with Native communities, and potential impact on advocacy efforts as they prepare for an evolving political landscape. By examining the incoming administration's key players, the Navajo Nation aims to ensure its priorities—such as veterans' affairs, water rights, the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA), and the ongoing Navajo-Hopi land dispute (ONHIR)—remain central in Washington, D.C., while identifying opportunities for collaboration and addressing potential challenges.

The incoming administration's Cabinet picks offer the Navajo Nation an exciting opportunity to diversify its approach to problem solving with federal leaders across a wide range of areas. Each nominee brings a variety of experiences both in their respective fields and beyond, offering potential avenues for new solutions. The NNWO and Navajo Nation officials play an intentional role in identifying shared goals and interests to advance advocacy efforts and address key priorities:

- **Marco Rubio (Secretary of State):** Rubio's extensive legislative experience and work on foreign policy committees could open doors for discussions on environmental issues and cross-border partnerships that align with Navajo Nation priorities.
- **Scott Bessent (Secretary of the Treasury):** Bessent's expertise in investment and economic policy may provide opportunities to advocate for financial initiatives supporting tribal infrastructure and community development.
- **Pete Hegseth (Secretary of Defense):** Hegseth's focus on veterans' issues and military service presents an opportunity to strengthen support for Navajo veterans, particularly in housing, healthcare, and recognition of the Code Talkers' legacy.
- **Pam Bondi (Attorney General):** Bondi's legal expertise in combatting human trafficking offers a platform for discussions on tribal sovereignty and justice initiatives, including addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).
- **Doug Burgum (Secretary of the Interior):** Burgum's experience in the private sector and leadership in environmental policy provides a chance to advocate for stronger energy projects and Navajo Nation water rights.

- **Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (Secretary of Health and Human Services):** Kennedy's focus on addressing healthcare disparities could contribute to the Nation's efforts to improve mental health services and pandemic recovery for tribal members.
- **Linda McMahon (Secretary of Education):** McMahon's business background could facilitate discussions on increasing funding for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools and promoting Navajo language and cultural programs.
- **Doug Collins (Secretary of Veterans Affairs):** Collins' shared military background with the Navajo Nation's veterans makes him a promising ally in advocating for veteran support services.
- **Kristi Noem (Secretary of Homeland Security):** While Noem's history with Native communities raises concerns, careful engagement could help protect tribal sovereignty and land protections.
- **Lee Zeldin (EPA Administrator):** Zeldin's environmental policies may conflict with tribal goals, but opportunities exist to advocate for sustainable water and air protections through Navajo sovereignty.

While these Cabinet picks represent both challenges and opportunities for Navajo engagement with the federal government, it is important to note that they are not yet finalized. Changes have already occurred, such as former Florida Representative Matt Gaetz withdrawing from consideration as Attorney General, with Pam Bondi subsequently stepping into the nomination. This situation highlights the dynamic nature of the confirmation process, which will continue to require careful monitoring as deputy secretaries and similar positions are filled.

The NNWO remains dedicated to monitoring these developments and serving as a resource for the Navajo People. Through ongoing research and updates, it will ensure tribal leaders are informed and equipped to make strategic decisions. The office will continue compiling biographies and conducting legislative analyses, with a focus on assessing incoming House and Senate leadership to align advocacy efforts effectively. Additionally, you can stay updated on these nominations through resources like [POLITICO's Cabinet Tracker](#) and other platforms.