

Trump chooses TV doctor Mehmet Oz to lead Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

FATIMA HUSSEIN and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press Nov 19, 2024 Updated 1 hr ago 7

WASHINGTON — President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday tapped Dr. Mehmet Oz, a former television talk show host and heart surgeon, to head the agency that oversees health insurance programs for millions of older, poor and disabled Americans and selected Wall Street executive Howard Lutnick to lead the Commerce Department.

"Dr. Oz will be a leader in incentivizing Disease Prevention, so we get the best results in the World for every dollar we spend on Healthcare in our Great Country," said in a statement. "He will also cut waste and fraud within our extremely expensive Government Agency, which is a third of our Nation's Health Care Budget and a quarter of our entire National Budget."

Oz, who ran a failed 2022 bid to represent Pennsylvania in the U.S. Senate, has been an outspoken support of Trump and in recent days expressed support for Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s nomination for the nation's top health agency, the Department of Health and Human Services.

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As the administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Oz would report to Kennedy. If confirmed by the Senate, Oz would be responsible for the programs — Medicaid, Medicare and the Affordable Care Act — that more than half the country relies on for health insurance. Medicaid provides nearly-free health care coverage to millions of the poorest children and adults in the U.S. while Medicare gives older Americans and the disabled access to health insurance. The Affordable Care Act is the Obama-era program that offers health insurance plans to millions of Americans who do not qualify for government-assisted health insurance, but do not get insurance through their employer.



President-elect Donald Trump says he is nominating Dr. Mehmet Oz to lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.
Matt Rourke, Associated Press

“Americans need better research on healthy lifestyle choices from unbiased scientists, and @robertfkennedyjr can help as HHS secretary,” Oz shared in a post on Instagram last week, along with a photo of him and Kennedy together.

Oz has been accused of hawking dubious medical treatments and products on his defunct TV show. And during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, he pressured government officials to make hydroxychloroquine widely available, despite unresolved questions about its safety and effectiveness.

Lutnick, meanwhile, will have a key role carrying out Trump's plan to raise and enforce tariffs as commerce secretary, Trump said on Tuesday. Lutnick is a cryptocurrency enthusiast and head of brokerage and investment bank Cantor Fitzgerald.

Trump made the announcement Tuesday on his social media platform, Truth Social. In the post, Trump said Lutnick “will lead our Tariff and Trade agenda, with additional direct responsibility for the Office of the United States Trade Representative.”

Lutnick is a co-chair of Trump's transition team, along with Linda McMahon, the former wrestling executive who previously led Trump's Small Business Administration. Both are tasked with putting forward candidates next administration.

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The nomination would put Lutnick in charge of a sprawling Cabinet agency that is involved in funding new computer chip factories, imposing trade restrictions, releasing economic data and monitoring the weather. It is also a position in which connections to CEOs and the wider business community are crucial.

An advocate for imposing wide-ranging tariffs, Lutnick told CNBC in September that "tariffs are an amazing tool for the president to use — we need to protect the American worker." Trump on the campaign trail proposed a 60% tariff on goods from China — and a tariff of up to 20% on everything else the United States imports.

Mainstream economists are generally skeptical of tariffs, considering them a mostly inefficient way for governments to raise money and promote prosperity.



Howard Lutnick speaks before Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally at Madison Square Garden, Sunday, Oct. 27, 2024, in New York. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)
Evan Vucci

Lutnick had been considered for treasury secretary, a role that has been at the center of high-profile jockeying within the Trump world. At the same time, the position is closely watched in financial circles, where a disruptive appointment could have immediate negative consequences on the stock market, which Tr

The news also comes after billionaire Elon Musk and others in Trump's orbit called on Trump to dump previous front-runner for treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, in favor of Lutnick. Musk said in his post that "Bessent is a business-as-usual choice, whereas @howardlutnick will actually enact change."

Lutnick joined Cantor Fitzgerald in 1983 and rose through the ranks to be appointed president and CEO in 1991.

Lutnick also chairs financial technology company BGC Group, Inc. and the commercial real estate services firm Newmark Group, Inc.

Lutnick has donated to both Democrats and Republicans in the past, and once appeared on Trump's NBC reality show, "The Apprentice." He has become a part of the president-elect's inner circle, and has shared the stage with Trump at events in the closing days of his campaign, including a rally at Madison Square Garden.

He came under criticism in the campaign's final days for an interview with CNN in which he repeated Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s debunked criticisms of vaccines.

— Associated Press writer Matthew Perrone in Washington contributed.

Here are the people Trump has picked for key positions so far

President-elect Donald Trump



Among President-elect Donald Trump's picks are Susie Wiles for chief of staff, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio for secretary of state, former Democratic House member Tulsi Gabbard for director of national intelligence and Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz for attorney general.

Evan Vucci, Associated Press

Susie Wiles, White House Chief of Staff



Susie Wiles, 67, was a senior adviser to Trump's 2024 presidential campaign and its de facto manager.
Evan Vucci, Associated Press

Marco Rubio, Secretary of State



Rubio
Wilfredo Lee, Associated Press

Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Defense



Pete Hegseth, 44, is a co-host of Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends Weekend" and has been a contributor with the network since 2014, where he developed a friendship with Trump, who made regular appearances on the show.

Hegseth lacks senior military or national security experience. If confirmed by the Senate, he would inherit the top job during a series of global crises — ranging from Russia's war in Ukraine and the ongoing attacks in the Middle East by Iranian proxies to the push for a cease-fire between Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah and escalating worries about the growing alliance between Russia and North Korea.

Hegseth is also the author of "The War on Warriors: Behind the Betrayal of the Men Who Keep Us Free," published earlier this year.

George Walker IV, Associated Press

Matt Gaetz, Attorney General



Trump said Wednesday he will nominate Florida Rep. **Matt Gaetz** to serve as his attorney general, naming a loyalist in the role of the nation's top prosecutor.

In selecting Gaetz, 42, Trump passed over some of the more established lawyers whose names had been mentioned as being contenders for the job.

"Matt will end Weaponized Government, protect our Borders, dismantle Criminal Organizations and Restore Americans' badly-shattered Faith and Confidence in the Justice Department," Trump said in a statement.

Gaetz resigned from Congress Wednesday night. The House Ethics Committee has been investigating an allegation that Gaetz paid for sex with a 17-year-old, though that probe effectively ended when he resigned. Gaetz has denied any wrongdoing.

Alex Brandon, Associated Press

Kristi Noem, Secretary of Homeland Security



Trump picked South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a well-known conservative who faced sharp criticism in her memoir about shooting a rambunctious dog, to lead an agency crucial to the president's immigration agenda.

Noem used her two terms leading a tiny state to vault to a prominent position in Republic

South Dakota is usually a political afterthought. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, Noem did not order restrictions that other states had issued and instead declared her state "open for business." Trump held a fireworks rally at Mount Rushmore in July 2020 in one of the first large gatherings of the pandemic.

She takes over a department with a sprawling mission. In addition to key immigration agencies, the Department of Homeland Security oversees natural disaster response, the U.S. Secret Service, and Transportation Security Administration agents who work at airports.
Matt Rourke, Associated Press

Doug Burgum, Secretary of the Interior



The governor of North Dakota, who was once little-known outside his state, Burgum is a former Republican presidential primary contender who endorsed Trump, and spent months traveling to drum up support for him, after dropping out of the race.

Burgum was a serious contender to be Trump's vice presidential choice this summer. The two-term governor was seen as a possible pick because of his executive experience and business savvy. Burgum also has close ties to deep-pocketed energy industry CEOs.

Trump made the announcement about Burgum joining his incoming administration while addressing a gala at his Mar-a-Lago club, and said a formal statement would be coming the following day.

In comments to reporters before Trump took the stage, Burgum said that, in recent years, the power grid is deteriorating in many parts of the country, which he said could raise national security concerns but also drive up prices enough to increase inflation.

"There's just a sense of urgency, and a sense of understanding in the Trump administration," Burgum said.
AP Photo/Alex Brandon

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Services



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. ran for president as a Democrat, than as an independent, and **then endorsed Trump**. He's the son of Democratic icon Robert Kennedy, who was assassinated during his own presidential campaign.

The nomination of Kennedy to lead the Department of Health and Human Services alarmed people who are concerned about **his record of spreading unfounded fears about vaccines**. For example, he has long advanced the debunked idea that vaccines cause autism.

Evan Vucci, Associated Press

Sean Duffy, Secretary of Transportation



Sean Duffy is a former House member from Wisconsin who was one of Trump's most visible defenders on cable news. Duffy served in the House for nearly nine years, sitting on the Financial Services Committee and chairing the subcommittee on insurance and housing. He left Congress in 2019 for a TV career and has been the host of "The Bottom Line" on Fox Business.

Before entering politics, Duffy was a reality TV star on MTV, where he met his wife, "Fox and Friends Weekend" co-host Rachel Campos-Duffy. They have nine children.

Jacquelyn Martin, Associated Press

Chris Wright, Secretary of Energy



A campaign donor and CEO of Denver-based Liberty Energy, Wright is a vocal advocate of oil and gas development, including fracking — a key pillar of Trump's quest to achieve U.S. "energy dominance" in the global market.

Wright also has been one of the industry's loudest voices against efforts to fight climate change. He said the climate movement around the world is "collapsing under its own weight." The Energy Department is responsible for advancing energy, environmental and nuclear security of the United States.

Wright also won support from influential conservatives, including oil and gas tycoon Harold Hamm. Hamm, executive chairman of Oklahoma-based Continental Resources, a major shale oil company, is a longtime Trump supporter and adviser who played a key role on energy issues in Trump's first term.

Andy Cross, The Denver Post via AP

Howard Lutnick, Secretary of Commerce



Trump picks Dr. Mehmet Oz, Howard Lutnick for administration

Trump chose Howard Lutnick, head of brokerage and investment bank Cantor Fitzgerald and a cryptocurrency enthusiast, as his nominee for commerce secretary, a position in which he'd have a key role in carrying out Trump's plans to raise and enforce tariffs.

Trump made the announcement Tuesday on his social media platform, Truth Social.

Lutnick is a co-chair of Trump's transition team, along with Linda McMahon, the former wrestling executive who previously led Trump's Small Business Administration. Both are tasked with putting forward candidates for key roles in the next administration.

The nomination would put Lutnick in charge of a sprawling Cabinet agency that is involved in funding new computer chip factories, imposing trade restrictions, releasing economic data and monitoring the weather. It is also a position in which connections to CEOs and the wider business community are crucial.

AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Doug Collins, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Doug Collins is a former Republican congressman from Georgia who gained recognition for defending Trump during his first impeachment trial, which centered on U.S. assistance for Ukraine. Trump was impeached for urging Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden in 2019 during the Democratic presidential nomination, but he was acquitted by the Senate. Collins has also served in the armed forces himself and is currently a chaplain in the United States Air Force Reserve Command.

"We must take care of our brave men and women in uniform, and Doug will be a great advocate for our Active Duty Servicemembers, Veterans, and Military Families to ensure they have the support they need," Trump said in a statement about nominating Collins to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs.

John Bazemore, Associated Press

Karoline Leavitt, White House press secretary



Karoline Leavitt, 27, was Trump's campaign press secretary and currently a spokesperson for his transition. She would be the youngest White House press secretary in history.

The White House press secretary typically serves as the public face of the administration and historically has held daily briefings for the press corps.

Leavitt, a New Hampshire native, was a spokesperson for MAGA Inc., a super PAC supporting Trump, before joining his 2024 campaign. In 2022, she ran for Congress in New Hampshire, winning a 10-way Republican primary before losing to Democratic Rep. Chris Pappas.

Leavitt worked in the White House press office during Trump's first term before she became communications director for New York Republican Rep. Elise Stefanik, Trump's choice for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Ted Shaffrey, Associated Press

Tulsi Gabbard, National Intelligence Director



Former Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard has been tapped by Trump to be director of national intelligence, keeping with the trend to stock his Cabinet with loyal personalities rather than veteran professionals in their requisite fields.

Gabbard, 43, was a Democratic House member who unsuccessfully sought the party's 2020 presidential nomination before leaving the party in 2022. She endorsed Trump in August and campaigned often with him.

"I know Tulsi will bring the fearless spirit that has defined her illustrious career to our Intelligence Community," said in a statement.

Gabbard, who has served in the Army National Guard for more than two decades, deployed to Iraq in 2003 and 2005. She came to the role as somewhat of an outsider compared to her predecessor. The current director, John Ratner, was confirmed by the Senate in 2021 following several years in a number of top national security posts.

Evan Vucci, Associated Press

John Ratcliffe, Central Intelligence Agency Director



Trump has picked John Ratcliffe, a former Texas congressman who served as director of national intelligence during his first administration, to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency in his next.

Ratcliffe was director of national intelligence during the final year and a half of Trump's first term, leading the U.S. government's spy agencies during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I look forward to John being the first person ever to serve in both of our Nation's highest Intelligence positions," Trump said in a statement, calling him a "fearless fighter for the Constitutional Rights of all Americans" who would ensure "the Highest Levels of National Security, and PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH."

Manuel Balce Ceneta, Associated Press

Lee Zeldin, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator



Trump has chosen former New York Rep. **Lee Zeldin** to serve as his pick to lead the **Environmental Protection Agency**.

Zeldin does not appear to have any experience in environmental issues, but is a longtime ~~supporter~~ of the former president. The 44-year-old former U.S. House member from New York wrote on X, "We will dominate, revitalize our auto industry to bring back American jobs, and make the US the best place to do so while protecting access to clean air and water," he added.

During his campaign, Trump often attacked the Biden administration's promotion of electric vehicles, referring to a tax credit for EV purchases as a government mandate. Trump also often told voters his administration would "Drill, baby, drill," referring to his support for expanded oil and gas drilling.

In a statement, Trump said Zeldin "will ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions that will unleash the power of American businesses, while at the same time maintaining the highest standards, including the cleanest air and water on the planet."

Matt Rourke, Associated Press

Brendan Carr, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission



Trump has named Brendan Carr, the senior Republican on the Federal Communications Commission, as the new chairman of the agency tasked with regulating broadcasting, telecommunications and broadband. Carr is a longtime member of the commission and served previously as the FCC's general counsel. He has been unanimously confirmed by the Senate three times and was nominated by both Trump and President Joe Biden to the commission. Carr made past appearances on "Fox News Channel," including when he decried Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris' pre-Election Day appearance on "Saturday Night Live." He wrote an op-ed last month defending a satellite company owned by Trump supporter Elon Musk.

Jonathan Newton - pool, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Elise Stefanik, Ambassador to the United Nations



Rep. Elise Stefanik is a **representative from New York** and one of Trump's staunchest defenders going back to his first impeachment.

Elected to the House in 2014, Stefanik was selected by her GOP House colleagues as House Republican Conference chair in 2021, when former Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney was removed from the post after publicly criticizing Trump for falsely claiming he won the 2020 election. Stefanik, 40, has served in that role ever since as the third-ranking member of House leadership.

Stefanik's questioning of university presidents over antisemitism on their campuses helped lead to two of those presidents resigning, further raising her national profile.

If confirmed, she would represent American interests at the U.N. as Trump vows to end the war waged by Russia against Ukraine begun in 2022. He has also called for peace as Israel continues its offensive against Hamas in Gaza and its invasion of Lebanon to target Hezbollah.

Jose Luis Magana, Associated Press

Mike Huckabee, Ambassador to Israel



Trump will nominate former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee to be ambassador to Israel.

Huckabee is a staunch defender of Israel and his intended nomination comes as Trump has moved his foreign policy more closely with Israel's interests as it wages wars against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon. "He loves Israel, and likewise the people of Israel love him," Trump said in a statement. "Mike Huckabee is a true friend to Israel."

Huckabee, who ran unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 and 2016, is a figure among evangelical Christian conservatives, many of whom support Israel due to Orthodox Christianity's belief that Jews are God's chosen people and that Israel is their rightful homeland.

Trump has been praised by some in this important Republican voting bloc for moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Oded Balilty, Associated Press

Steven Witkoff, Special Envoy to the Middle East



Trump on Tuesday named real estate investor Steven Witkoff to be special envoy to the Middle East.

The 67-year-old Witkoff is the president-elect's golf partner and was golfing with him at Trump's club in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Sept. 15, when the former president was the target of a second attempted assassination.

Witkoff "is a Highly Respected Leader in Business and Philanthropy," Trump said of Witkoff in a statement. "Steve will be an unrelenting Voice for PEACE, and make us all proud!"

Trump also named Witkoff co-chair, with former Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler, of his inaugural committee.

Evan Vucci, Associated Press

Mike Waltz, National Security Adviser



Trump asked Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., a retired Army National Guard officer and war veteran, to be his national security adviser, Trump announced in a statement Tuesday.

The move puts Waltz in the middle of national security crises, ranging from efforts to provide weapons to Ukraine and worries about the growing alliance between Russia and North Korea to the persistent attacks in the Middle East by Iran proxies and the push for a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah.

"Mike has been a strong champion of my America First Foreign Policy agenda," Trump's statement said, "and will be a tremendous champion of our pursuit of Peace through Strength!"

Waltz is a three-term GOP congressman from east-central Florida. He served multiple tours in Afghanistan and also worked in the Pentagon as a policy adviser when Donald Rumsfeld and Robert Gates were defense chiefs.

He is considered hawkish on China, and called for a U.S. boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing due to its involvement in the origin of COVID-19 and its mistreatment of the minority Muslim Uighur population.

Ted Shaffrey, Associated Press

Stephen Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy



Stephen Miller, an **immigration hardliner**, was a vocal spokesperson during the president's campaign and a key priority of mass deportations. The 39-year-old was a senior adviser during Trump's first term and has since Miller has been a central figure in some of Trump's policy decisions, notably his move to end family separation of immigrant families.

Trump argued throughout the campaign that the nation's economic, national security and law enforcement needs were met by deporting people who are in the United States illegally. Since Trump left office in January, Miller has joined the president of America First Legal, an organization made up of former Trump advisers aiming to sue the Biden administration, media companies, universities and others over issues such as free speech.

Evan Vucci, Associated Press

Tom Homan, 'Border Czar'



Thomas Homan, 62, has been tasked with Trump's top priority of carrying out the largest deportation operation in the nation's history.

Homan, who served under Trump in his first administration leading U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was widely expected to be offered a position related to the border, an issue Trump made central to his campaign.

Though Homan has insisted such a massive undertaking would be humane, he has long been a loyal supporter of Trump's policy proposals, suggesting at a July conference in Washington that he would be willing to "run the biggest deportation operation this country's ever seen."

Democrats have criticized Homan for his defending Trump's "zero tolerance" policy on border crossings during his first administration, which led to the separation of thousands of parents and children seeking asylum at the border.

John Bazemore, Associated Press

Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to advise White House on government efficiency



Elon Musk, left, and Vivek Ramaswamy speak before Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump at an Oct. 27 campaign rally at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Trump on Tuesday said Musk and former Republican presidential candidate Ramaswamy will advise the White House on "Government Efficiency" — which is not, despite the name, a government agency.

The acronym "DOGE" is a nod to Musk's favorite cryptocurrency, dogecoin. Trump said Musk will work from outside the government to offer the White House "advice and guidance" and will ask the Management and Budget to "drive large scale structural reform, and create an entrepreneurial government never seen before." He added the move would shock government systems. The new organization will operate.

Musk, owner of X and CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, has been a constant presence at Mar-a-Lago since Trump won the presidential election. Ramaswamy suspended his campaign in January and threw his support behind Trump. Trump said the two will "pave the way for my Administration to dismantle Government Bureaucracy, slash excess regulations, cut wasteful expenditures, and restructure Federal Agencies."

Evan Vucci, Associated Press photos

Additional selections to the incoming White House



Dan Scavino, deputy chief of staff

Scavino, whom Trump's transition referred to in a statement as one of "Trump's longest serving and most trusted aides," was a senior adviser to Trump's 2024 campaign, as well as his 2016 and 2020 campaigns. He will be deputy chief of staff and assistant to the president.

Scavino had run Trump's social media profile in the White House during his first administration. He was also held in contempt of Congress in 2022 after a month-long refusal to comply with a subpoena from the House committee's investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

James Blair, deputy chief of staff

Blair was political director for Trump's 2024 campaign and for the Republican National Committee. He will be deputy chief of staff for legislative, political and public affairs and assistant to the president.

Blair was key to Trump's economic messaging during his winning White House comeback campaign this year, a driving force behind the candidate's "Trump can fix it" slogan and his query to audiences this fall if they were better off than four years ago.

Taylor Budowich, deputy chief of staff

Budowich is a veteran Trump campaign aide who launched and directed Make America Great Again, Inc., a super PAC that supported Trump's 2024 campaign. He will be deputy chief of staff for communications and personnel and assistant to the president.

Budowich also had served as a spokesman for Trump after his presidency.

William McGinley, White House counsel

McGinley was White House Cabinet secretary during Trump's first administration, and was the Republican National Committee's election integrity effort during the 2024 campaign.

In a statement, Trump called McGinley "a smart and tenacious lawyer who will help me achieve my agenda, while fighting for election integrity and against the weaponization of law enforcement."

Jose Luis Magana, Associated Press

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