

US politics & policy

Who will run Donald Trump's new administration?

The new US president is expected to prize loyalty in his picks for key posts



Donald Trump with, clockwise from bottom left: Robert Lighthizer, Elon Musk, Mike Pompeo, John Paulson, JD Vance, Kellyanne Conway © FT montage; AFP/Getty Images

Colby Smith, Felicia Schwartz and Lauren Fedor in Washington 8 HOURS AGO

After clinching the election, Donald Trump's next task will be staffing the top ranks of his cabinet.

In his first term, **Trump** surrounded himself with business titans, Wall Street executives and former generals — many of whom did not have previous government experience and ended up departing under contentious circumstances.

Trump is again poised to tap unconventional picks, eschewing Washington insiders. The goal now will be to identify loyal individuals who will support even his most unorthodox proposals — such as mass deportations of immigrants — but can also win Senate confirmation. That task has become easier now that the Republicans have gained control of the upper chamber of Congress.

Here are some of the top contenders who will serve in Trump's administration:

Key people / loyalists

Elon Musk





Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk became the loudest cheerleader for Trump. In the final stretch of the campaign, the Tesla and X chief executive went as far as doling out \$1mn payments to registered voters in swing states who signed his petition backing free speech and the right to bear arms.

Trump has already designated Musk as head of a new efficiency commission “tasked with conducting a complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government and making recommendations for drastic reforms”.

Other top loyalists to Trump include Howard Lutnick, head of Wall Street behemoth Cantor Fitzgerald, who serves as co-chair of Trump's presidential transition team. A registered Republican who has also donated to Democrats including Hillary Clinton, he will play a decisive role in staffing the administration.

Mike Johnson, the top Republican in the House of Representatives who ingratiated himself to Trump by supporting his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, could also play a key role. So too could Vivek Ramaswamy, who once sought the Republican presidential nomination — unless he decides to run for JD Vance's Senate seat in Ohio instead.

Trump's second term could also include former adviser Stephen Miller and former strategist Steve Bannon, who was just released from federal prison, resuming influential posts in the administration.

Chief of staff

Susie Wiles



Susie Wiles, who served as Trump's de facto campaign manager, is a top contender

for one of the most important positions in the White House. The 67-year-old grandmother from Florida has worked as a party operative for more than four decades, helping to elect Republicans at every level of politics. She has been dubbed “one of the most consequential people in American politics right now”, in a Politico report.

Other people in contention for the post include Brooke Rollins, a conservative lawyer who served as Trump's domestic policy adviser in the final year of his first term, as well as former senior adviser Kellyanne Conway.

Kevin McCarthy, who became the first House Speaker to be voted out because of opposition from hardline conservatives in the Republican party, has also been floated as a potential pick.

Treasury and economy

Scott Bessent



The top economic job could be a toss-up between two hedge-fund titans, Scott Bessent, who runs Key Square Capital Management, and billionaire John Paulson. Both have backed Trump's plans for tariffs on imports but have framed them as an important negotiating tool that could be watered down if concessions are extracted from other countries.

In an [interview](#) with the Financial Times, Bessent expressed his support for a strong US dollar, which has been the country's long-standing policy, saying Trump “stands by the US as a reserve currency”.

Kevin Hassett





Among the names most frequently floated to be chair of the Federal Reserve, a position that will become vacant when Jay Powell's term ends in May 2026, is Kevin Hassett, who [served as chair](#) of Trump's Council of Economic Advisers during his first term.

Kevin Warsh, a former Fed governor now at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, has also been touted as a possible candidate for the job.

Trump has said presidents should have more of a say in monetary policy decisions, in a sign that the Fed's long-standing independence could come under pressure.

On trade policy, a key pillar of Trump's platform, Robert Lighthizer and Peter Navarro, who both held trade-related positions in Trump's first administration, have emerged as some of the biggest proponents of tariffs.

Trump has floated imposing universal tariffs of up to 20 per cent on all imports coming into the US, with another 60 per cent levy imposed on Chinese imports.

Foreign policy / defence

Ric Grenell



A fierce Trump defender who has made no secret of his desire to be his secretary of state, Ric Grenell was US ambassador to Germany and acting director of national intelligence in the former president's administration.

Trump has referred to Grenell, who is known for his frequent tussles with the media, as his "envoy", and he acted as a de facto shadow secretary of state while Joe Biden was in office, meeting with far-right leaders from Central America, eastern Europe and beyond.

Other contenders for secretary of state include Republican senator Bill Hagerty of Tennessee, along with Trump's former national security adviser Robert O'Brien.

Another Trump loyalist, Kash Patel, has been floated as a possible national security adviser.

Tom Cotton



Trump previously considered Arkansas senator Tom Cotton to be his defence secretary and he is seen as a contender again. A former army infantry officer and Iraq and Afghanistan veteran, he is a staunch Trump supporter.

Mike Waltz



Other top picks for the post include Florida congressman Mike Waltz, a former Green Beret who has advised Trump on national security and is seen as an important foreign policy voice in the party, as well as former secretary of state Mike Pompeo and former veterans affairs secretary Robert Wilkie.

Other top jobs

Robert F Kennedy Jr



One-time campaign rival Robert F Kennedy Jr appears poised to clinch a key role in shaping public health policy in Trump's administration. An anti-vaccine activist,

Kennedy has suggested that common immunisations, as well as fluoridated water, could be under scrutiny, along with the Affordable Care Act — or Obamacare — which provides health insurance to 45mn Americans.

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