

Trump names hedge fund boss as finance chairman

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Billionaire Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, announced Thursday that hedge fund boss Steven Mnuchin had agreed to become his national finance chairman for the general election campaign. Mnuchin will be tasked with raising as much as \$1 billion for the Trump campaign and the Republican National Committee.

The decision marks a shift in Trump's campaign operations, which have largely self-funded and have relied more on free media coverage than paid advertisements. As of the latest reports filed with the Federal Election Commission, the Trump campaign has spent about \$48 million, of which \$36 million came from a series of loans from the candidate, which could be repaid from future contributions. The remaining \$12 million came from individual contributions.

The choice of Mnuchin is a demonstration of the cynical doubletalk that has become a trademark of the Trump campaign. While posturing as the defender of those devastated by the Wall Street crash and the dismal-to-nonexistent economic "recovery" under Obama, Trump has brought in as his finance chairman a Wall Street figure closely tied to the mass evictions and foreclosures that were characteristic of the subprime mortgage collapse.

"Steven is a professional at the highest level with an extensive and very successful financial background," Trump said in a statement. "He brings unprecedented experience and expertise to a fundraising operation that will benefit the Republican Party and ultimately defeat Hillary Clinton." Actually, Mnuchin's "experience" includes making financial contributions to Hillary Clinton for both her US Senate and presidential campaigns.

Mnuchin was a partner for 17 years at Goldman Sachs, the biggest and most influential Wall Street

investment bank, which has supplied top Washington officials for decades, including the Treasury secretaries in the administrations of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

During his tenure at Goldman Sachs, Mnuchin contributed liberally to the campaigns of Hillary Clinton for US Senate in 2000 and 2006. He continued to support Clinton in her first presidential bid, giving the maximum of \$2,300 in 2007. After Clinton was defeated by Barack Obama, Mnuchin gave the maximum donation to the Obama general election campaign.

Like most Wall Street figures—and Trump himself—Mnuchin cultivated politicians in both parties, giving contributions to Republicans Rudy Giuliani, Steve Forbes and Mitt Romney, as well as Democrats including John Edwards, Charles Schumer, Al Gore and John Kerry. He also donated to Barack Obama's Senate campaign in 2004.

After leaving Goldman Sachs in 2009, Mnuchin moved to Los Angeles and launched OneWest Bank Group LLC, serving as president and CEO for six years, with significant financial backing from a group of billionaires including George Soros, a longtime backer of the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton. The bank was sold last year to CIT Group for \$3.4 billion.

Mnuchin also opened a hedge fund, Dune Capital, which provided financing for several top-grossing Hollywood films, including *Avatar*, several iterations of the *X-Men* franchise, and the hideous pro-war film *American Sniper*.

As a banker, Trump's new fundraising chief made a specialty of targeting the most vulnerable sections of borrowers, including the elderly and racial minorities. Among the facts reported in the press over the past 24

hours are the following:

- According to a judge in Long Island, OneWest Bank engaged in “harsh, repugnant and repulsive” acts in attempting to evict a couple from their home around Thanksgiving. In 2009 the judge erased \$525,000 in mortgage debt as a penalty. He also called the bank’s conduct “inequitable, unconscionable, vexatious and opprobrious.”

- OneWest attempted to foreclose on an 89-year-old widow in California, Irene Jones, who said that the stress of repeated foreclosure threats had contributed to her husband’s depression and subsequent death.

- The bank changed the locks on a Minnesota woman, Leslie Park, during a blizzard, during which she returned home and discovered she could not gain shelter in her own home.

- The California Reinvestment Coalition found that OneWest’s reverse mortgage servicing subsidiary Financial Freedom was responsible for 39 percent of reverse mortgage foreclosures, although it held only 17 percent of the market for reverse mortgages, which are primarily contracted with the elderly. OneWest was thus foreclosing its elderly customers at twice the average rate.

- Of the 35,877 foreclosures the bank carried out over a six-year period in California, more than two-thirds took place in neighborhoods that were more than 50 percent nonwhite—black, Hispanic or Asian.

- In 2011, Mnuchin encountered “protests on the lawn of his Bel Air mansion by foreclosed homeowners angered at his lender’s handling of soured mortgages,” according to Bloomberg.

All in all, a record that explains the mutual attraction between the financier and the political con-man who is about to become the Republican presidential nominee, posing as the advocate of the downtrodden and dispossessed.



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