

# Democrats move Trump cabinet nominees through confirmation process

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While posturing about resisting Trump, Senate Democrats are either supporting or permitting the bulk of his extreme right-wing cabinet nominees to go forward for confirmation.

Senate Democrats maneuvered to delay Senate committee votes on Senator Jeff Sessions for Attorney General, former Goldman Sachs banker Steven Mnuchin for Treasury Secretary and Congressman Tom Price for Secretary of Health and Human Services. However, Betsy DeVos (Department of Education), Montana Representative Ryan Zinke (Department of the Interior) and former Texas governor Rick Perry (Department of Energy) all advanced to the confirmation stage on Tuesday.

Rex Tillerson, CEO of ExxonMobil, received enough votes in the Senate on Monday to open debate on his confirmation as the Secretary of State. It is expected that the Senate will vote today to approve his nomination.

Every Republican Senator supported the procedural vote to proceed, along with three Democrats, Joe Manchin (West Virginia), Heidi Heitkamp (North Dakota) and Mark Warner (Virginia) and one Independent, Angus King (Maine).

Elaine Chao, the wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and former Secretary of Labor, was confirmed on Tuesday with overwhelming bipartisan support in a 93-6 vote.

Democrats are boycotting committee votes that would advance the nominations of Mnuchin and Price. Without at least one Democrat attending the hearings, the Republicans on the committee are unable to move forward with a vote.

Following Trump's firing of acting attorney general Sally Yates on Monday after she refused to enforce the travel ban on immigrants from seven predominantly

Muslim countries, Democratic senators extended their remarks in committee on Tuesday in order to delay until today a vote on Sessions. Once moved by the committee, it is all but guaranteed that Sessions' nomination will be approved by the Senate.

Even with all of the Democrats' posturing, the billionaire DeVos, a long-time enemy of public education, advanced Tuesday to a full confirmation vote in the Senate after the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions voted along party lines to recommend her.

While none of the 11 Democrats on the committee cast their vote for DeVos, they did not take any steps to block her nomination from advancing. DeVos' confirmation is now all but guaranteed with Republicans controlling a majority in the Senate.

In addition to being a leading proponent of charter schools and vouchers that funnel state funds from public schools to religious and private for-profit schools, DeVos is also a prominent Republican financier. She gave campaign donations amounting to \$1 million to 21 Republican Senators who will be voting on her confirmation.

DeVos and her family also donated \$2.25 million to the Senate Leadership Fund and \$900,000 to the National Republican Senatorial Committee during the 2016 election cycle. During one of her Senate hearings, she admitted that it was "possible" that she and her family had donated \$200 million to Republican candidates in the last several decades.

DeVos' husband, Dick DeVos, is a billionaire and former CEO of Amway, a company cofounded by his father. Her brother is Erik Prince, the founder of the Blackwater military contractor notorious for activities during the Iraq war, now known as Academi. Prince, who was an advisor for the Trump transition team, also

oversaw the assembling and training of a private mercenary army for the United Arab Emirates.

Representative Zinke and former Governor Perry, both shills for the energy industry and opponents of environmental regulation, passed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support. Manchin, the West Virginia Democrat, gave his support to both nominees.

Perry is well known for pledging to eliminate the Department of Energy when he was running for president in 2012. He is now one pro forma vote away from leading the federal agency that he once deemed unnecessary.

Zinke, a former Navy SEAL, has voted to slash the budget of the Environmental Protection Agency and supported legislation that would open federal lands to corporate interests. He has played to right-wing religious fundamentalism, declaring Democrat Hillary Clinton the “antichrist” and voting to defund Planned Parenthood for providing abortion services.



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