

Trump Nominees Signal Big Changes In Washington

During the Presidential campaign that lasted more than a year, energy and environmental issues were hardly ever raised.

Last week, President-elect Donald Trump put energy and environmental issues on the front page of newspapers across the nation, and stirred up a hornet's nest when he named Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt as his nominee for administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, followed by nominating former Texas Governor Rick Perry as secretary of the Energy Department, followed by the announcement that the Chairman and CEO of ExxonMobil, Rex Tillerson, was his nominee for Secretary of State.

Lobbyists from environmental groups from coast-to-coast went to work developing public advocacy programs in opposition to all three but AG Pruitt drew a lot of the immediate attention. The Sierra Club, one of the most liberal of all of the environmental groups, unveiled an ad campaign aimed at denying Pruitt's confirmation as the next U.S. EPA administrator. The digital ads will target senators in 10 states with a message urging them to "say no to #PollutingPruitt for EPA."

The environmental group has criticized President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the agency, noting Pruitt is a leading critic of Obama administration's climate regulations. The Sierra Club did not reveal the cost of the one-week digital campaign, but described it as a "five-figure" expenditure.

The ads will target senators who the Sierra Club considers "fence sitters," meaning that it believes these senators possibly could be persuaded to not vote for confirmation of Pruitt. Senators identified by the Sierra Club are: Tennessee Sen. Lamar Alexander (R), Maine Sen. Susan Collins (R), Indiana Sen. Joe Donnelly (D), Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake (R), South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham (R), North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D), Nevada Sen. Dean Heller (R), West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin (D), Ohio Sen. Rob Portman (R) and Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey (R).

Environmental groups are also upset with Perry, who vowed during a previous campaign for president to dismantle the Energy Department, as well as two other federal agencies.

It has been pointed out that some of the functions at DOE could not be abolished completely. One of the primary duties at DOE includes protecting the U.S. nuclear arsenal. A large chunk of DOE's most recent budget request of \$32.5 billion would go to overseeing nuclear weapons, nonproliferation, and cleaning up Cold War weapon production sites. Additionally, DOE oversees 17 labs doing research on, among other things, next-generation supercomputers, mapping the human genome and testing nuclear reactors.

However, many of the functions at DOE could be transferred to other government agencies, such as moving the nuclear oversight to the Defense Department. Some have wondered for years why DOE ended up with nuclear weapons.

The biggest irony of all is the nomination of the CEO of the largest U.S. oil company to be the nation's top ambassador. It wasn't very long ago that the CEOs of the major oil companies were ordered to come to Washington to testify about high energy prices and "obscene profits."

President-elect Trump has definitely turned Washington from the far left to the right.