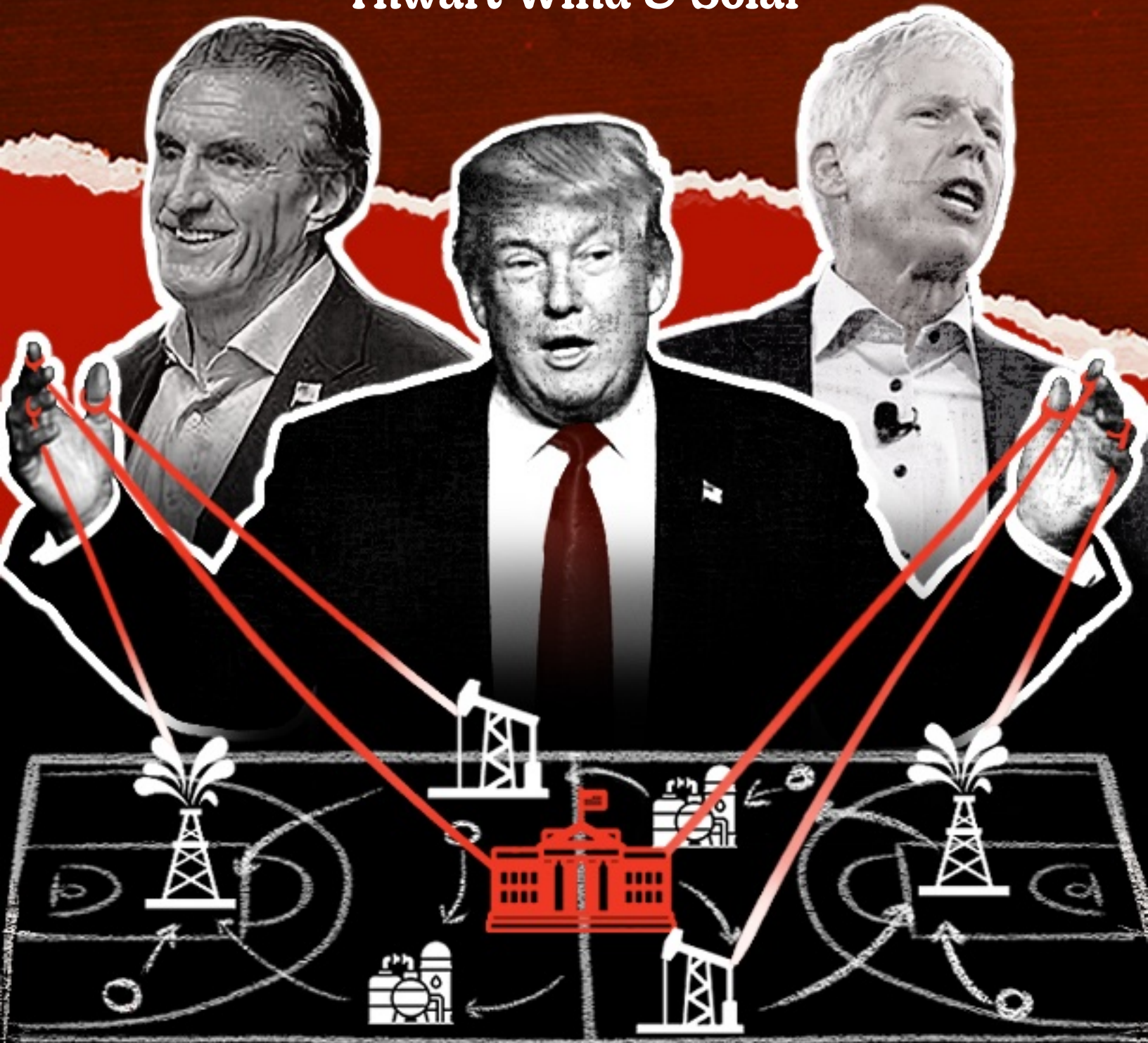


# Trump's Polluter Playground

100+ Fossil Fuel Insiders & Far-Right Ideologues  
Prop Up Dirty Energy, Plunder Public Lands, and  
Thwart Wind & Solar



## **Acknowledgments**

*This report was written by Toni Aguilar Rosenthal of the Revolving Door Project and Alan Zibel of Public Citizen. It was copy-edited by Rick Claypool of Public Citizen as well as KJ Boyle and Hannah Story Brown of the Revolving Door Project with input from Tyson Slocum, director of Public Citizen's energy program.*

## **About the Revolving Door Project**

*The Revolving Door Project (RDP) was created in order to scrutinize executive branch appointees to ensure they use their office to serve the broad public interest, rather than to entrench corporate power or seek personal advancement. In recent years our work has expanded to include monitoring how corporate and billionaire influence distorts coverage of economic issues in the media, the administration of law in our courts, and policymaking by state constitutional officers.*

## **About Public Citizen**

*Public Citizen is a national non-profit organization with more than 500,000 members and supporters. We represent consumer interests through lobbying, litigation, administrative advocacy, research, and public education on a broad range of issues including consumer rights in the marketplace, product safety, financial regulation, worker safety, safe and affordable health care, campaign finance reform and government ethics, fair trade, climate change, and corporate and government accountability.*

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## Introduction

President Donald Trump has spent the last nine months halting the growth of the American clean energy economy in its tracks, dragging the country into a vengeful, backward-leaning energy agenda that does the bidding of his [fossil fuel allies](#) and serves the interest of billionaire campaign donors. Consumers and the planet alike will suffer for it.

In recent years, the U.S. has [made huge strides](#) in laying the groundwork for a decarbonized economy. Under former President Joe Biden, the adoption of technologies such as electric vehicles, solar power, and battery storage accelerated quickly as the cost of green energy [plunged](#). Now, however, the fossil fuel industry has tightened its control on Washington and is actively working to derail the clean energy transition.

Ironically, the Biden era also saw massive amounts of fossil fuel production and drove huge profit margins for oil companies in the United States. Indeed, no country in world history [has produced more oil](#) than the U.S., and domestic production of natural gas is [at record levels](#). Ignoring the data, Trump and his oil and gas industry backers continue to distort [the history of the Biden administration](#) to be one of an intense fossil fuel crackdown, a convenient excuse to turn back the clock to a fossil-fueled energy policy that puts America at a disadvantage even [as the rest of the world electrifies](#).

Trump's domestic policy and tax legislation, passed in July 2025, ends support for renewable and clean energy manufacturing while providing new [subsidies and tax breaks](#) to the already heavily subsidized fossil fuel industry. This overt fossil-favoritism signals an end to even the pretense of an "all of the above energy strategy" that alleges to promote *both* fossil fuels and renewables — a favorite [talking point](#) of trade groups, [centrist pundits](#) and corporate lobbyists.

Amid a far-reaching retreat from a clean energy economy, Trump and his allies also are fighting to put [our public lands](#) up for sale. From [removing protections](#) for national forest lands, to attacking [national monuments](#), to opening new [drilling opportunities](#) for oil in the Alaskan Arctic, the Trump administration seems intent on handing our public lands to extractive industries, no matter the cost to the public.

As a result, this report seeks to examine the environmentally deleterious policies pursued by this administration, and the corporate cronies instituting them, in three key arenas: the massive expansion of polluting energy, the destruction of public lands, and the sabotage and suppression of renewable energy.

## Key Findings

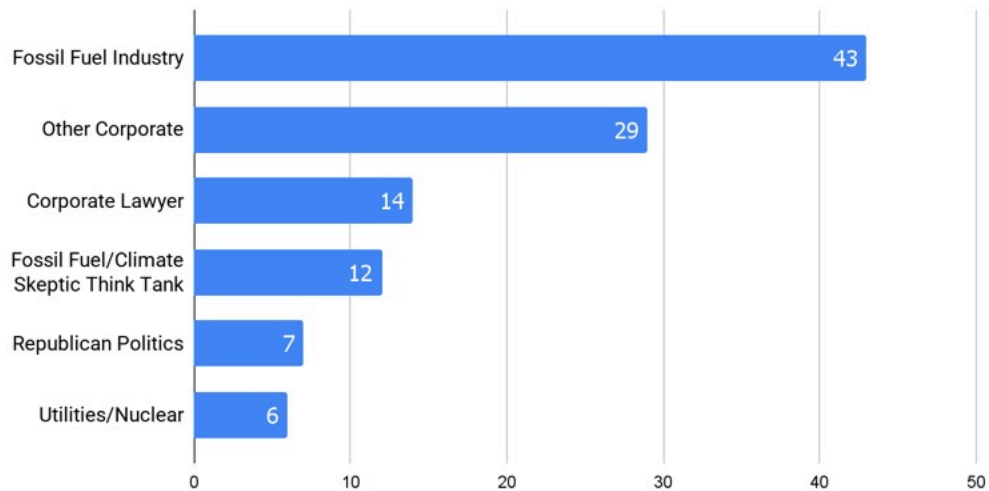
Public Citizen and the Revolving Door Project analyzed the backgrounds of 111 executive branch nominees and appointees (**Chart 1**) charged with the nation’s energy and environmental policymaking. The analysis found that President Trump has installed fossil fuel insiders and renewable energy opponents across nine agencies (**Chart 2**) that implicate energy and environmental policy.

These agencies have made dozens of hires from the fossil fuel sector, mining conglomerates, and other polluting industries, as well as others who are well-paid to support a dirty energy agenda, such as corporate lawyers and the staffers from far right think tanks directly tied to Trump’s dirty energy agenda. As part of our compilation, we also included Republican politicians and political operatives who have attached themselves to MAGA’s dirty energy agenda. That includes:

- 43 former fossil fuel industry employees
- 29 former corporate executives
- 14 former corporate lawyers
- 12 people tied to fossil fuel-funded right-wing think tanks
- 7 people tied primarily to Republican politics such as elected officials and staffers pushing fossil fuel interests
- 6 from utility companies or the nuclear energy industry

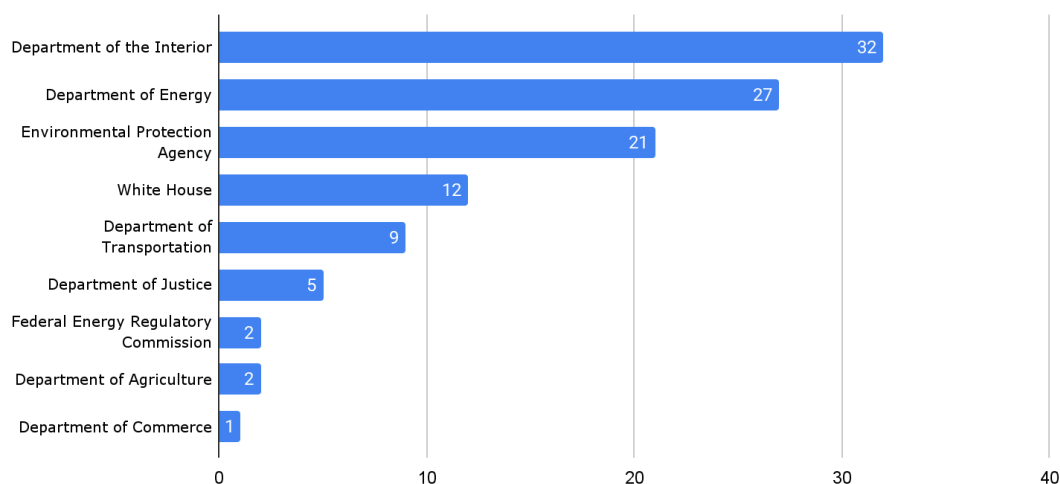
[See the full list here](#)

**Chart 1: Backgrounds of Trump 2.0 Officials at Key Agencies**



Source: Revolving Door Project/Public Citizen analysis

**Chart 2: Key Trump 2.0 Political Officials Executing Industry Agenda, By Agency**



Source: Revolving Door Project/Public Citizen analysis

We relied on data pulled from the Office of Personnel Management's [Plum Book](#), data appearing on [Congress.gov](#), and surveys of personnel-related news reporting. Our list includes officials (both nominated and appointed) whose work includes environmental and energy policy, even if such policy oversight is only a part of their role or agency. We examined the backgrounds of staffers, political appointees, and nominees not yet confirmed across nine federal agencies who have worked in the second Trump administration, including officials who have since left the government. We did not include withdrawn nominations or junior-level hires. [See the full list here \(Appendix 1\).](#)

We used “Republican politics” as a category for Trump officials who have primarily spent their professional careers as GOP elected officials or staffers, but do not have a corporate or think tank background. Some of those included are former elected officials who received campaign contributions from polluting interests. Others have taken actions that benefitted polluting industries while serving in Congress, state government or other public offices.

We also examined all 37 Senate-confirmable nominees to three agencies – the Energy Department, Environmental Protection Agency and Interior Department. Our analysis of this smaller subset of officials at key agencies found that 25 of those – more than two thirds – had polluter ties, while only 12 did not. As of publication of this report, there was no current nominee for 15 key spots, according to our analysis of [Congress.gov](#). [See the full list here \(Appendix 2\).](#)

Besides revolving door corporate nominees and appointees, we found numerous examples of Trump administration hires serving in, or nominated for, high positions with little, if any, subject matter expertise. Many have political connections, experience in other fields or experience with marketing, public relations and public speaking. For example:

- A key White House [aide](#) coordinating energy policy worked for Vice President Mike Pence and Lockheed Martin but appears to have no energy industry or policy experience.
- A nominee to a top federal energy regulator overseeing electricity markets and pipelines has [no energy policy experience](#).
- The Environmental Protection Agency's new general counsel [acknowledged](#) in his confirmation hearing that he worked for a regional law firm, was fired after 18 months, and has scant experience practicing the law.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now led on an [acting basis](#) by a former investment banker from Texas who ran the state's Alcoholic Beverage Commission.
- The Energy Department's nuclear cleanup official is a [Colorado real estate developer](#) with no nuclear cleanup experience.
- An adviser in the Interior Department's policy and budget office appears to have no qualification except for his childhood friendship with former presidential candidate and Trump ally, [Vivek Ramaswamy](#).
- A nominee to an Energy Department position overseeing energy efficiency and renewables is [an oil and gas executive with seemingly no renewable energy experience](#).

## A Corporate Cabinet Doing The Bidding of Energy Barons

Trump's return to the Oval Office has been far more focused and aggressive than his first term. His cabinet secretaries seem deferential and disinclined to push back on even his most extreme ideas. Years of planning by Trump aides and far-right ideologues have resulted in a vast policy gameplan – mapped by [Project 2025](#) and the [America First Agenda](#) – that is now [enabling](#) Trump to stock his administration with sycophants ready to ransack the federal government, demolish federal capacity, and exert ever more control over core government functions.

Fossil fuel donors provided [\\$96 million](#) to support the Trump campaign and allied groups and contributed [\\$11.8 million](#) to Trump's second inauguration. Project 2025, led by the [Heritage Foundation](#) and other right-wing organizations and authors, [calls](#) for “a rapid ramp-up of oil, natural gas, and coal production on federal lands” while also [advocating](#) for the rescission of federal lands protections and the outright sale of treasured public lands.

This approach is an [explicit goal of Project 2025 architects](#), who sought to create a “[personnel pipeline](#)” to cement long-term power for their fossil fuel and other corporate allies. The America First Policy Institute, worked closely with [Trump's campaign and transition team](#), hiring new political personnel to execute Trump's extreme energy agenda. In fact, like AFPI, several of the think tanks in the Trump Administration's orbit receive generous support from fossil fuel megadonors such as the [Texas oil billionaire Tim Dunn](#), who has [built a political network](#) that has pushed the national Republican party further into the realm of the [Christian far right](#). The ascent of Dunn and other allied donors represents a changing of the guard from the libertarian Koch network, which had [extensive influence](#) on the first Trump administration, yet have [parted ways](#) on some issues, such as Trump's tariffs.

Surprising some observers who incorrectly [expected moderation](#), the Trump administration has set in motion the [destruction](#) of environmental laws, enacted [cuts](#) and cancellations of renewable energy [funding](#), [halted programs](#) and gutted [standards](#), enacted [mass layoffs](#) with a focus on gutting existing climate and pollution [science](#) and [renewable](#) energy [staff](#). The consequences will long outlast Trump's second term: weakened climate stability, stalled clean energy innovation, badly damaged scientific research capacity, and increased pollution.

In the first hours of his second term, Trump declared [a bogus national energy emergency](#), falsely claiming that wind and solar energy have led the nation into an energy crisis. The sole aim of this made-up “emergency” – based on political grievance rather than reality-based energy policy – is to protect the fossil fuel industry's bottom line while attacking popular support for renewable energy.

Trump has ignored the widespread, successful deployment of clean energy sources in states as diverse as [Texas](#), [California](#), [Iowa](#), [Oklahoma](#), [Kansas](#), and [Florida](#). Instead, the Trump administration has heavily [promoted coal](#), the most polluting fuel, as a purported energy solution, even going so far as to issue multiple Executive Orders [aimed](#) at ["reinvigorating"](#) the industry. Richard Goldberg, a now-departed White House staffer charged with setting up a new interagency working group called the National Energy Dominance Council, told *Politico* that the Trump administration's goal is to cater to the dirty energy industry. [Goldberg said](#):

*You just have to call and say, you have a project, you have something that we're working on that is a new build, a new mine, a new dig, a new connection, a new pipeline, a new export terminal, you name it, and that it will contribute to energy dominance in the following ways. It will make sure we are adding reliable baseload energy to our grid in the following ways. **This is the focal point of the entire U.S. government to say, what do you need from the U.S. government to make your project happen in 14 or 28 days instead of five or 10 years or 30 years? Is it permitting assistance? Is it financing assistance? Is it other regulatory reviews that have become so burdensome over many years?***

Speaking on an energy lobbyists' [podcast](#), Trump NEDC senior policy adviser Brittany Kelm was even more direct about the "white glove service" the Trump White House provides to corporate polluters:

*We're like this little tiger team, **concierge, white glove service**, essentially. And then we were put together very particularly with the president's priorities in mind on energy. So keeping coal plants open, establishing critical mineral mining domestically, and then that broader supply chain.*

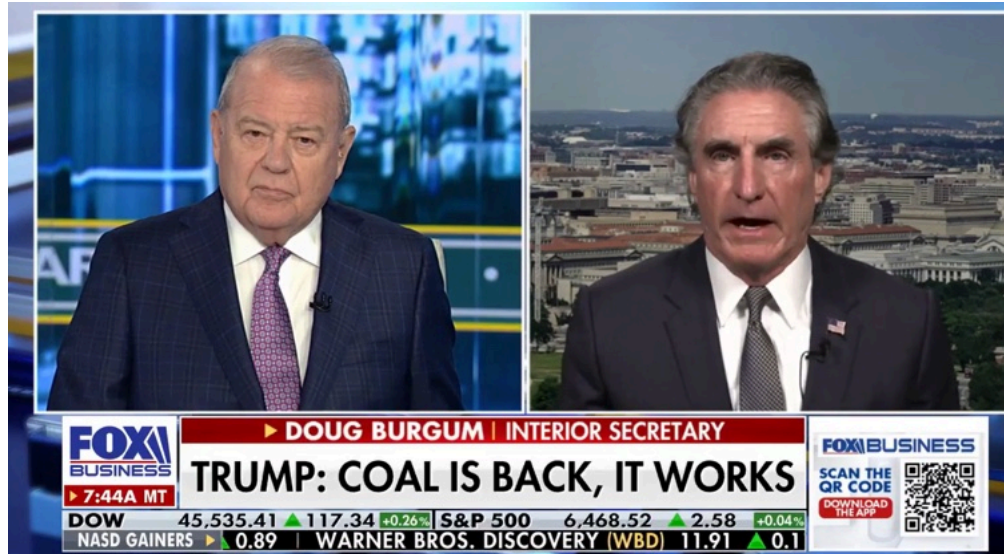
Besides speeding up fossil fuel projects, the Trump administration, led by [pro-fossil fuel](#) cabinet secretaries, has even tried to undermine widely accepted climate science. It recruited [climate skeptics](#) to author an Energy Department [paper](#) published in July 2025. The paper downplayed the impacts of climate change on the economy and complained about what it termed "exaggerated projections of future warming." The Trump administration has used this [specious analysis](#) to provide justification for a proposed [repeal](#) of the 2009 finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger the planet, which provides a scientific and legal rationale for regulating planet-warming emissions under the Clean Air Act. Even after catastrophic flooding killed more than [130](#) people in Texas in July – a disaster characteristic of the increasingly severe weather events worsened by climate chaos – the Trump administration has chosen to gut the federal government's ability to regulate environmental hazards and respond to climate change-fueled disasters.

Here is a look at Trump's anti-climate corporate cabinet:

**DOUG BURGUM, Interior Secretary:** The former governor of North Dakota, Burgum has long been a [conduit](#) between oil and gas industry donors and the Trump campaign, and his own oil and gas ties are extensive. Burgum [leases his own land for oil exploration](#) to Continental Resources, run by close Trump ally [Harold Hamm](#), and has often supported Hamm's business interests, including backing a [controversial carbon dioxide pipeline](#) pursued by Hamm's [company](#). Burgum also [helped](#) shut down the movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline (backed by Kelcy Warren's Energy Transfer) in 2017. Burgum [issued](#) an evacuation order [that](#) "helped bring an end to the demonstrations," and proceeded to [sign](#) four bills increasing criminal penalties for protesters, in an apparent attempt to [chill](#) Indigenous and environmentalist free speech. Burgum's office also parroted oil company claims, [including](#) denying the use of water cannons on land defenders at the protest site. After shutting down the protest, Energy Transfer donated \$1,500 to Burgum in [2018](#), again in [2019](#), and \$25,000 in [2020](#).

Burgum's promotion of oil interests has continued in his new roles in the administration. Burgum now chairs Trump's National Energy Dominance Council, a multi-agency coordination group that appears focused on speeding up specific fossil fuel projects. Burgum has conflated management of public lands with corporate bookkeeping. "That's the balance sheet of America, and if we were a company, they would look at us and say, 'wow you are really restricting your balance sheet,'" Burgum [said](#) at his January confirmation hearing. Burgum [also](#) told oil, gas and mining executives that he considers them "[the customer](#)" at a conference in March. Burgum has worked on several fronts to suppress renewable energy (see our [renewable energy section](#)) and has even called for the government to [pay](#) fossil fuel companies for canceled projects. An Interior Department press release [claimed](#) that clean energy projects are "environmentally damaging."

Meanwhile, Burgum has enthusiastically [embraced coal production](#). "Coal is incredibly important to our economy at a very fundamental level," Burgum [told Fox News](#). "Not only is coal used in a thermal way to produce electricity, which we need for just about everything, but certainly, right now, we need it to lower the price for consumers across the country." In reality, the Trump administration's [empty promises to communities currently reliant on coal](#) are doomed to fail, as coal-fired generation is far more [expensive](#) than renewable energy while also being far dirtier.



Interior Secretary Doug Burgum [touting the takeover](#) of D.C. police on Fox News.

Burgum's current stance as an antagonist of renewable energy and a dirty fuel promoter is a [stark contrast](#) from his own previously professed views. Burgum did not oppose the wind power industry during his [gubernatorial](#) tenure, and installations of wind turbines skyrocketed during his time in office, in line with his promise to make North Dakota [carbon-neutral](#) by 2030. In 2021, Burgum appeared with Jennifer Granholm, the Biden administration's energy secretary, for a bipartisan event promoting an "all of the above" energy strategy that would promote decarbonization, albeit with [dubious](#) carbon capture schemes that have long been touted by the oil and gas industry with little success. "Burgum hosts Energy Secretary Granholm, stresses all-of-the-above energy policy and carbon opportunities" read [a press release](#) from the North Dakota governor's office at the time, in which Burgum spoke optimistically about a decarbonized future.

"We can reach carbon neutrality in the state of North Dakota by 2030 without a single mandate, without any additional regulation. We can get there just through the innovation and the different geology that we have," Burgum [said at the time](#). "The amount of activity that's driving toward how do we decarbonize our current fuels, and then how do we store carbon for the future and how do we diversify the fuel base – it's really an incredible time." Four years later, Burgum [proclaimed](#) that "we've got to stop talking about the energy transition."

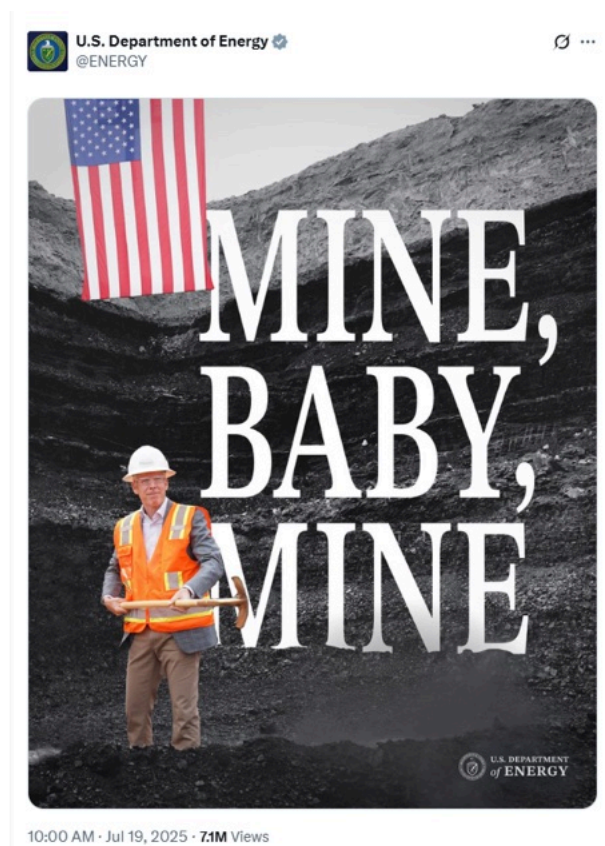
As Interior Secretary, Burgum has also devoted considerable time to the idea of selling off public lands for [housing](#). These efforts would likely just produce second homes, vacation homes, and land speculation that would [do little if anything](#) to solve America's housing supply problems. Burgum has also been a frequent Fox News guest and enthusiastic [spokesman](#) for Trump's authoritarian [takeover](#) of Washington, D.C.'s policing, including by [pledging](#) to deploy National Park police in service of the effort and [boasting about](#) his agency's law enforcement prowess on social media.



Interior Secretary Doug Burgum [touting the takeover](#) of D.C. police on Fox News.

**CHRIS WRIGHT, Energy Secretary:** In past administrations, the U.S. Department of Energy has operated as a relatively staid scientific agency charged with overseeing America’s nuclear arsenal, conducting scientific research into new energy technologies, analyzing energy markets, and making loans to innovative technology companies. Under Wright, the former CEO and co-founder of fracking firm Liberty Energy, the agency’s public face is now one of unabashed support of fossil fuels. For example, Wright has quickly positioned himself and the agency as if it were a marketing firm for coal, the world’s dirtiest energy source, even [redirecting a federal energy loan program](#) to fund coal investments. When not playing promoter for coal, Wright has also brought on board several Liberty Energy staffers to work at DOE.

Wright regularly makes public statements that downplay the effects of climate change, carbon pollution, and the environmental impacts of fracking. While Wright does not deny the existence of climate change, he argues that its importance is exaggerated, citing [several climate skeptics](#) with similar views. Wright is an evangelist for drilling more and exporting more U.S.-produced fossil fuels overseas. He has also [spread a stream of inaccurate information](#) about renewables, understating their



overall contribution to global energy production and ignoring massive growth in the sector in recent years. Wright and others in the Trump administration have been pushing for a more fossil fuel friendly stance at the International Energy Agency, and have even urged the ousting of a top official, [according to E&E News](#). The move came after House Republicans sought to cut funding for the agency, [complaining](#) that the IEA “has pursued politicized information to support climate policy advocacy.”

In an [opinion piece](#) in the Economist, Wright again downplayed climate change, writing that “[w]e will treat climate change as what it is: not an existential crisis but a real, physical phenomenon that is a byproduct of progress.” He argued that the world faces a choice between “an energy policy of exclusion and scarcity that shackles humanity and limits economic potential” or “a policy of inclusion and abundance, bursting all limits to growth and opportunity.” Wright has routinely adopted this line about renewables; as GOP lawmakers prepared to repeal Biden-era subsidies for the industry, Wright himself attacked renewable energy on [X](#), saying “if an energy source needs subsidies to stay afloat, how truly reliable, or affordable is it?” That analysis is, on its face, misleading and hypocritical, given the [longstanding subsidies](#) that have shored up Big Oil’s profit margins for decades, not to mention the slate of new industry subsidies still being [doled out](#) by Republican lawmakers.

While Wright served as CEO, Liberty Energy and its subsidiaries were regularly cited for workplace safety violations and environmental standards violations. In April 2024, Liberty [paid a \\$265,000](#) settlement for creating a hostile work environment for minority employees. Wright also [sat on the board](#) of nuclear reactor start-up Oklo, which has received grants from the Department of Energy and is reliant upon regulatory approvals from the Energy Department and Nuclear Regulatory Commission. During the Biden years, Wright’s companies filed a [lawsuit](#) seeking to block the Securities and Exchange Commission’s disclosure rule on climate-related financial risks – making them prime actors in the effort to deny investors crucial information about companies’ exposure to climate-related risks.

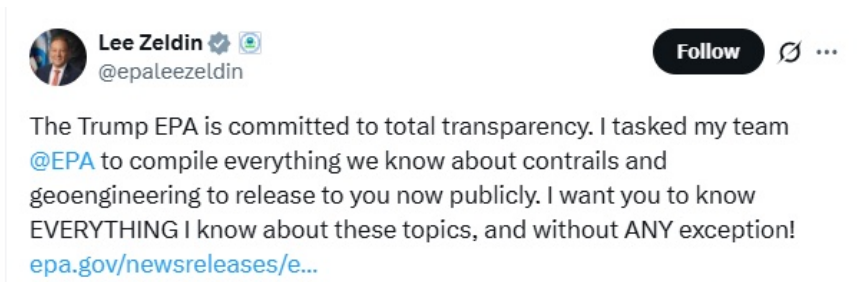
**LEE ZELDIN, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator:** A former Republican Congressman representing part of Long Island N.Y., Zeldin has launched [a comprehensive attack](#) on the EPA’s ability to function. Under his leadership, the agency has laid off thousands of workers, [eliminated](#) the EPA’s scientific research office, and undermined climate science and regulation. The EPA has proposed a [repeal](#) of its 2009 “endangerment finding,” a determination that provides a scientific basis and a legal rationale for regulating global warming emissions under the Clean Air Act based on the [consensus scientific assessment](#) that greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels are harming the public health and general welfare. Speaking on the right-wing podcast, “Ruthless,” Zeldin [said](#): “This has been referred to as basically driving a dagger into the heart of the climate change religion.” Simultaneously, Zeldin’s EPA is pursuing a [repeal](#) of clean vehicle emissions standards along with the degradation, reversal, or gutting of numerous other [environmental protections](#), including requirements that

industrial companies [report greenhouse gas emissions](#) and a Biden-era rule requiring the [chemical industry](#) to shoulder cleanup requirements for “forever chemicals.”



Energy Secretary Chris Wright and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin [promote the repeal](#) of an EPA finding that climate pollution is real, just as the U.S. experienced an extreme heat wave.

Zeldin has also [indulged conspiracy theories](#), lending the resources of the federal government to compiling information that responds to baseless speculation about weather modification. The EPA even published a [video](#) featuring Zeldin excitedly discussing the matter, while leaving any conclusions to EPA staff. (The EPA's resource page explaining line-shaped clouds known as condensation trails, or contrails, that make up exhaust clouds does appropriately debunk any conspiracy. It [states that](#) such trails “are a normal effect of jet aircraft operations” and notes that, “If you are seeing a lot of contrails in your area it is because there are a lot of jet aircraft flying overhead.”)



Zeldin ran unsuccessfully for Governor of New York in 2022 as a Trump supporter who voted [against](#) certifying the results of the 2020 election while a Congressman. In a decade-old [interview](#) about climate change, Zeldin said that he was “not sold yet on the whole argument that we have as serious a problem as other people are.” Zeldin generally had a [track record of anti-environmental votes](#), though he voted [against](#) legislation that would actively block the EPA from mitigating climate change.

Zeldin's shift to a MAGA-friendly policy stance has confused some former constituents. “It's very hard for me to rectify the Lee Zeldin I've known and met with for over a decade with the person we see now,” said Adrienne Esposito, the executive director of the

Citizen's Campaign for the Environment, a Long Island environmental group, [in the New York Times](#).

**BROOKE ROLLINS, Agriculture Secretary:** The USDA, which manages [more than 190 million](#) acres of public lands via the U.S. Forest Service, has spent the last six months [scrubbing](#) all mentions of the climate crisis from its website, [expanding](#) timber production, [attempting to repeal](#) the "roadless rule" which [protects nearly 60 million acres](#) of the national forests from logging, and [attacking renewable energy](#). *ProPublica* reported in July that the agency has [thousands](#) of vacant firefighting jobs, imperiling forest service lands, employees, and visitors alike amidst [another destructive](#) wildfire season. The USDA has even [proposed](#) shuttering nine of the Forest Service's regional offices, which could have a massive impact on wildfire preparedness across the West.

Others at the Forest Service seem similarly disdainful of the agency's purpose and mission. Michael Boren — Donald Trump's pick to lead the Forest Service — previously [faced](#) a restraining order from the very same agency he now seeks to lead for allegedly endangering forest service work crews. Boren ran [afoul](#) of his soon-to-be-employer by building a private airstrip on national recreation land, and in a separate incident for [building](#) an unauthorized cabin on national forest land. While Boren awaits confirmation at the Forest Service, he joined the Trump administration in September after being [named an assistant secretary at the Interior Department](#).



Rollins and Zeldin visited Capitol Hill in the weeks before Trump's inauguration. Source: Rollins' [Facebook](#) profile.

Rollins herself is a [Texas native and alumna](#) of the rightwing, Trump-allied, think tanks the [America First Policy Institute](#) and the [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#). (Zeldin was also a [Board Member](#) of America First Policy Institute's advocacy arm, [America First Works](#).) Rollins, had [functionally](#) "no agricultural policy track record to comment on," according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, and appeared to be "another example of President-elect Trump doling out cabinet appointments for loyalty rather than expertise." Rollins started her career on [Rick Perry's gubernatorial staff](#) and then joined

the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a project of [Tim Dunn](#), the former CEO of Texas oil company CrownQuest Operating, which he sold to Occidental Petroleum, reaping a [\\$2.2 billion](#) personal windfall. Rollins' [husband](#), Mark Rollins, is simultaneously the president of Hillwood Energy, a U.S. drilling company and [HKN Energy](#), an energy company based in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Both companies were [founded](#) by Texas billionaire Ross Perot Jr.

Rollins [helped guide](#) TPPF to become a [formidable](#) national influence operation that has attacked environmental laws and the wind power industry. TPPF's former CEO, Kevin Roberts, [became president](#) of the Heritage Foundation in 2021. In addition to Dunn, TPPF's funders have [included](#) the Koch brothers, ExxonMobil, State Farm Insurance and R.J. Reynolds. Following Donald Trump's defeat in 2020, Rollins helped found the America First Policy Institute when she and current Education Secretary Linda McMahon [approached](#) Dunn with the idea for AFPI. [Within](#) weeks, Dunn (along with two others from TPPF) [funded and registered](#) the organization to prepare for Trump's eventual third bid for the presidency. Rollins [gushed](#) about Dunn in a Wall Street Journal story. "He's a visionary," Rollins said. "His ability to build organizations and structure and culture is so incredible. I've relied on him more for that than his funding" adding that: "This is a 100-year play." No fewer [than eight former AFPI staffers](#), including Rollins, have been tapped for Cabinet-level positions in the second Trump Administration.

**SEAN DUFFY, Transportation Secretary:** A former reality television star, member of Congress, and Fox News personality, Transportation Secretary Duffy has been an enthusiastic MAGA spokesman. Duffy has brought an aggressive, highly politicized TV pundit style to the government, using the Transportation Department's authority to attack the wind energy industry and promote fossil fuels, while attacking the Biden administration. Duffy has also [disparaged](#) electric vehicles and spouted [fearmongering misinformation](#) about the safety of the New York City subway. Duffy appeared with New York City Mayor Eric Adams and offered to have DOGE [find inefficiencies in the subway system's management](#). Though Duffy appears to spend much of his time owning the libs on television, he is currently also serving as [acting administrator](#) of NASA, where he has announced [plans](#) to build a small nuclear reactor on the moon.



Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy [appears](#) on Fox News

Duffy's agency has embraced fossil fuels, while working to sabotage wind turbines. In March 2025, the Maritime Administration (a department within DOT) issued a [permit](#) to an offshore liquefied natural gas export terminal off the Louisiana coast that had stalled under the Biden administration. The project was a key priority of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), who [pushed](#) the Trump administration to approve the project. Also under Duffy's watch, a federal pipeline regulator, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, or PHMSA, has rapidly [ratcheted back enforcement actions](#) against the pipeline industry and [changed enforcement procedures](#), sparking [criticism](#) from Democrats on Capitol Hill. In addition, Energy Transfer Partners, the pipeline company led by [major Trump donor](#) Kelcy Warren has [sued PHMSA](#) in an effort to have the agency's enforcement process ruled unconstitutional.

## A Fossil Fuel Fanatic's Wishlist

The fossil fuel industry has landed a slate of former executives, lobbyists, lawyers and more in leadership positions across the federal government. From there, these officials seem to be openly doing the industry's bidding. For example, Energy Secretary Chris Wright has taken steps to extend the life of [coal and gas-fired power plants](#) by issuing "emergency" orders to [keep them online](#). A study with [significant analytical flaws](#), is the purported [justification](#) to keep these plants open, claiming that demand from data centers (an industry that Wright believes should grow without [government constraints](#)) will lead to a hundredfold increase in power blackouts within five years.

The EPA is also now set to [rescind](#) its landmark 2009 Endangerment Finding, which empowers the government to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. The proposal relies on a [recent DOE paper](#) titled "A Critical Review of Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the U.S. Climate" which questioned well-settled science about the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on climate change, extreme weather, and public health. To write the paper, the Energy Department enlisted [scientists](#) whose skeptical or dismissive views on climate change are far outside the mainstream, including Stephen Koonin, a former chief scientist at BP who has called climate science "[not settled](#)," as well as [four other climate skeptics](#).



Climate skeptic Stephen Koonin spoke with Chris Wright, then CEO of Liberty Energy, at a 2021 "[fireside chat](#)."

More than 85 scientists issued a [detailed comment](#) rebutting the DOE's analysis. Robert Howarth, a Professor of Ecology and Environmental Biology at Cornell, said that the endangerment finding [rescission](#) "borders on criminal negligence [.] The science was clear in 2009 and has become much stronger and clearer since: climate disruption is a large and growing problem; it is caused primarily from our use of fossil fuels and the resultant emissions of carbon dioxide and methane; and it is a deadly problem."

The proposed repeal of the EPA's endangerment finding is far from the only fossil fuel favor the administration has pursued. Kelcy Warren and his pipeline company [Energy Transfer](#) [donated](#) a combined [\\$25 million](#) to Donald Trump's MAGA Inc. super PAC in February 2025. On the first day of his second term, Trump rescinded Biden's executive order blocking the permit for Energy Transfer's controversial Keystone XL Pipeline, though it is not clear whether Keystone XL will be revived or replaced with a [different pipeline](#).



Donald J. Trump   
@realDonaldTrump

Our Country's doing really well, and today, I was just thinking, that the company building the Keystone XL Pipeline that was viciously jettisoned by the incompetent Biden Administration should come back to America, and get it built — NOW! I know they were treated very badly by Sleepy Joe Biden, but the Trump Administration is very different — Easy approvals, almost immediate start! If not them, perhaps another Pipeline Company. We want the Keystone XL Pipeline built!

8.72k ReTruths 37k Likes

Feb 24, 2025, 8:00 PM

"We want the Keystone XL Pipeline built!" Trump posted on Truth Social a few days after the donations. These contributions came [in addition](#) to the more than [\\$5.5 million](#) Warren donated to Trump as of August 2024, and the [\\$814,600](#) that Warren donated to help Trump cover his legal fees. Energy Transfer has displayed extensive compliance problems, evidenced by a long list of [enforcement actions](#) against the company, including penalties paid to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the states of New Mexico and Pennsylvania. In 2022, Energy Transfer [pleaded no contest](#) to criminal charges filed by the state of Pennsylvania over water contamination from an Energy Transfer-owned pipeline.

### **Spotlight: Driving Up Consumer Costs By Exporting Fuel**

Fossil fuel companies that profit from exports of natural resources are being given free rein to operate under Trump. While the Biden administration had become [increasingly skeptical](#) about the economic, environmental, and climate impacts of exporting liquefied natural gas, such concerns are now long gone.

Two Trump administration cabinet secretaries, Chris Wright and Doug Burgum, have acted as global gas salesmen, traveling to Europe to [push exports](#) and [gut European methane regulations](#) while attacking mainstream climate science. Under Trump, the Energy Department has approved LNG exports from several [proposed terminals](#), allowed increased exports from a [project already in operation](#) and granted [additional time](#) for another project to start operating.



Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum [appear](#) in spring 2025 on a Bloomberg Television interview from a Venture Global liquefied natural gas export terminal in Louisiana.

Over the summer, Trump announced a trade agreement calling for the European Union to [triple energy imports](#) from the U.S., buying \$250 billion per year of fossil fuels such as liquified natural gas (LNG), an import target widely seen as [highly unrealistic](#). The head of commodities strategy at ING Bank told the *Wall Street Journal* that the trade deal numbers are “[just not realistic. You’d essentially have to divert all energy trade. That’s just not possible.](#)” In reality, Europe’s LNG imports have been declining due to the deployment of renewables and demand-reduction policies, a recent Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis report [found](#). This goal of supplying \$250 billion worth of fossil fuels to the EU each year would expose U.S. families to higher energy prices. Already, the flood of LNG into the global market in the last few years has driven up U.S. natural gas prices considerably, and consumer prices [are likely to increase even further](#) as Trump pushes for even more exports.

The Trump Administration has also been ramping up pressure on Asia-Pacific countries to back [the giant Alaska LNG](#) project, which includes a 765-mile pipeline, gas treatment plant, and an export terminal. For decades, the Alaska LNG project has been met with consistent skepticism from the private sector, prompting Big Oil allies in Alaska to push for taxpayer-funded handouts to pay for the project, which has been touted by both [Democrats](#) and [Republicans](#). A South Korean official cited “big doubts about the project’s economic feasibility,” [telling the Financial Times](#), “The US is not providing the information we need about the costs.” The official also told the FT that South Korean gas buyers would “absolutely not” have considered investing in the project were it not for U.S. pressure.

## Key Corporate Cronies Implementing a Fossil Fuel Agenda

### ***U.S. Department of Energy***

**James Danly, Deputy Secretary of Energy:** A former energy industry attorney, Danly has a long track record of advocating for, and defending, coal and gas interests. Danly was Chairman of FERC for a year between November 2020 and January 2021, and was an energy lawyer with the law firm Skadden, Arps, according to his official [biography](#). Danly routinely criticized federal clean energy incentives while [speaking favorably on the role of coal and gas generation](#). In a recent confirmation hearing, Danly was also [evasive](#) on whether he would ensure climate and clean energy funds already approved by Congress would continue flowing. [Disclosures](#) from the Office of Government Ethics indicate Danly received \$1.35 million from his partnership share in Skadden last year. While at Skadden, Danly [represented](#) oil, gas, electric, and fossil fuel related companies and organizations including the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, Electric Power Supply Association, Southern Company, Enterprise Products Partners LP, Exelon Corporation, PJM Power Providers Group, and LS Power.

**P. Wells Griffith, Under Secretary of Energy:** Wells Griffith was [confirmed](#) to be the Under Secretary of Energy in September 2025. Per *ProPublica*, Griffith worked in a top role in the Energy Department during the first Trump Administration despite a [lack of relevant](#) experience. Griffith was named to a number of other roles during that administration, including positions at the National Security Council and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. Griffith's [LinkedIn](#) suggests a deep background in Republican politics broadly. After his time in Trump's administration, Griffith worked at FTI Consulting, which has [worked](#) for and with Big Oil. FTI also partnered with the Independent Petroleum Association of America to launch Energy in Depth, which PR Watch [described](#) as "a PR operation for the industry's multi-billion dollar financial interests in 'unconventional' drilling" of natural gas." According to a filing with the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, Griffith's spouse is also [employed](#) by Exxon Mobil. Griffith has appropriately [pledged](#) to recuse from activities including FTI Consulting, Exxon, and other interests.

**Jonathan Brightbill, General Counsel:** A former partner with law firm Winston & Strawn LLP, Brightbill has been [confirmed](#) to be the general counsel of the Department of Energy. While at Winston & Strawn, Brightbill represented major methane gas exporters, including Golden Pass LNG, an export terminal in Texas co-owned by Qatar Petroleum and ExxonMobil, according to a U.S. Department of Energy [filing](#) and another federal court [document](#). Brightbill also [served as legal counsel](#) for Port Arthur LNG LLC, a company jointly owned by KKR, ConocoPhillips, and Sempra Energy. Brightbill headed up the Department of Justice's environment division during Trump's first term, arguing [a key case](#) that limited the EPA's efforts to address climate change, as well as several other

[environmentally devastating actions](#). Brightbill also [provided advice](#) on the Trump administration's effort to repeal the EPA's 2009 endangerment finding and has been an [outspoken proponent](#) of short-circuiting National Environmental Policy Act reviews, which seek to document the environmental impact of major projects and allow public input. Brightbill was also a [key figure](#) in the first Trump administration's [controversial](#) use of emergency powers to seize land for the border wall. Brightbill has [agreed](#) to resign from activities involving known clients of his former firm, unless he secures an exemption.

**Tala Goudarzi, Principal Deputy Secretary, Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management:** After working at the Energy and Commerce Departments [in relatively junior roles](#) during the first Trump administration, Goudarzi has advanced quickly through the ranks of Trump's senior energy policy advisers. Before joining the second Trump administration, Goudarzi worked as an adviser to the Texas Oil & Gas Association, and Sempra Energy's LNG export terminal construction subsidiary, which was previously led by Dan Brouillette, the Secretary of Energy in the first Trump administration. Goudarzi then followed Brouillette to the Edison Electric Institute, where Brouillette was CEO for less than a year amid [internal discord](#). Goudarzi now oversees LNG export [terminal approvals](#), which the Trump administration is expediting. Her former boss, Brouillette, [formed](#) a pro-Trump energy policy PR effort, the [Restoring Energy Dominance Coalition](#), with former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt.

**Tristan Abbey, Administrator for the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA):** Abbey has been [confirmed](#) to be the Administrator for the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) of the Department of Energy. Abbey was nominated from the National Center for Energy Analytics (NCEA), a [project](#) of TPPF and a national energy think tank ostensibly [dedicated](#) to "reality-driven energy analyses." The group [says it](#) produces "credible, unbiased research on energy issues, both proactively and reacting to and correcting misinformation about the 'energy transition.'" Under administrations of both parties, the U.S. EIA has [historically](#) been an independent resource for the publication and analysis of energy data used by economists, energy market participants, environmental groups and the public at large. Previously, EIA's leadership was [drawn](#) from academics and other industry experts, in part to maintain the integrity of the agency's forecasts. Abbey started his career at hedge funds and venture capital firms founded by Trump insider Peter Thiel, [Clarium Capital Management](#) and Founders Fund. According to his [LinkedIn profile](#), Abbey is also a Senior Fellow at the Energy Policy Research Foundation, which [says](#) it is "a not-for-profit organization that studies energy economics and policy issues with special emphasis on oil, natural gas, and petroleum product markets." Abbey previously served in senior policy roles at the Senate and the White House during President Trump's first term.

**Andy Rapp, Senior Advisor for International Relations:** Rapp is the [co-founder](#) of Petrie Partners, a small investment advisory firm [which advises](#) on oil and gas financial transactions, including ExxonMobil's acquisition of Pioneer Natural Resources and numerous other oil and gas industry deals. Petrie has also served as a financial adviser for deals involving DOE-regulated liquefied natural gas export companies such as [Cheniere Energy](#) and [Tellurian](#), which was bought by Australia-based Woodside Energy. Petrie also [advised](#) on [Sable Offshore](#), a controversial offshore drilling restart project off the coast of California. One of Rapp's former colleagues at Petrie Partners bragged in [February 2025](#) that Energy Secretary Chris Wright "is someone we know in Denver and expect to do great things dealing with policy." Liberty Energy and Petrie's Denver office are [a few blocks apart](#).

**Alex Fitzsimmons, Director of the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Responses at the U.S. Department of Energy:** An [alumnus](#) of the Institute for Energy Research, a [Koch-funded](#) organization that [routinely attacks](#) renewable energy and efforts to lower greenhouse gas emissions, Fitzsimmons also [served](#) as the head of communications for [Fueling U.S. Forward](#), a short-lived pro-fossil fuel organization funded by [Koch dollars](#) and other oil and gas interests, like the [American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers](#). While there, Fitzsimmons routinely disparaged "[green energy cronyism](#)." Notably, during the first Trump administration, Fitzsimmons [was one](#) of the people who helped kill the so-called "Supergrid," an effort to [build](#) stronger connections between the country's grid systems, which would facilitate the growth of clean energy and save consumers billions.

Fitzsimmons [began his career](#) working for front group creator Berman & Company, run by Rick Berman, which often [worked](#) for the fossil fuel industry. Fitzsimmons also worked at ClearPath, which works on "[conservative clean energy policy](#)." During that time, Fitzsimmons worked on a paper that praised a key Biden administration's innovation, the Energy Department's the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations. That office "is a tremendous step forward for innovation and must become a permanent fixture in the federal structure," the paper [said](#). Under Trump, that same office has [terminated billions](#) in clean energy awards.

### *Federal Energy Regulatory Commission*

**David LaCerte, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:** A [Project 2025 author](#), LaCerte has worked in the Louisiana state and federal governments but displays scant evidence of any related experience in the electricity or natural gas field. "LaCerte's record is almost devoid of relevant experience and expertise," [wrote](#) Dan Farber, a Berkeley law professor.

LaCerte served as Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs under former Republican Gov. Bobby Jindal, [resigning](#) amid allegations of [poor conditions in nursing homes](#). After a state auditor accused LaCerte of [misusing public funds](#), LaCerte disputed the auditor's findings then filed a lawsuit [accusing](#) the state auditor of defamation, and that case has dragged on in court for several years over whether a trial should be allowed to proceed, with an appeals court [overturning](#) in May 2025 a lower court's decision to toss out the case.

FERC is an independent commission, legally outside the purview of the president. But Trump has openly tried to influence independent federal regulators, most prominently the [Federal Reserve](#). If [LaCerte](#) and [Laura Swett](#), an [energy lawyer](#), are confirmed, FERC could become a highly politicized arm of White House-driven MAGA energy policy, prioritizing coal and natural gas generators and energy exporters at the expense of renewables, and the public. The commission now contains two Democrats and one Republican after Trump [named a centrist Democrat, David Rosner, as the commission's interim chair](#).

LaCerte worked in the first Trump administration at the Office of Personnel Management and was appointed to the the [U.S. Chemical Safety Board](#) at the end of Trump's first term. LaCerte has also worked at law firms Baker Botts and Sternberg, Naccari & White, according to his LinkedIn [profile](#). At Baker Botts, LaCerte and other [lawyers won an award](#) for pro bono work from giant industrial conglomerate Koch Inc. and [posed in a picture](#) with CEO Charles Koch.

Despite his White House nomination, LaCerte has notably run afoul of the far right. [Far-right influencer](#) Laura Loomer, for example, [objected](#) to LaCerte's [legal work](#). Loomer, who [claimed](#) on social media that La Certe previously represented "woke" banks that "would undermine the goals of the Trump admin." Loomer's claim referred to LaCerte's legal [representation](#) of a taxpayer who [successfully](#) sued the state of Louisiana, arguing that it could not legally exclude Bank of America and Citibank from underwriting state bonds due to their policies on firearms.



LaCerte (second from left) and others receiving the Koch Pro-Bono Awards with Charles Koch (center), via [LinkedIn](#).

### ***Environmental Protection Agency***

**David Fotouhi, Deputy Administrator:** A former lawyer at [Gibson Dunn](#), a corporate [law firm](#) that [has represented](#) oil and gas clients including American Petroleum Institute, Energy Transfer, Enbridge, ConocoPhillips and others, Fotouhi's career has focused on securing regulatory rollbacks for corporate clients. Fotouhi was a [member](#) of the firm's environmental litigation practice and defended companies accused of violating emissions standards. *ProPublica* [reported](#) that Fotouhi "played a key part in rolling back climate regulations and water protections while serving as a lawyer in the Environmental Protection Agency during Trump's first administration." Fotouhi was part of the EPA legal team that [defended](#) the repeal of the Clean Power Plan and worked directly on EPA's revised regulatory definition of "Waters of the United States" under the Clean Water Act. Most recently, Fotouhi challenged the EPA's recent ban of asbestos, which [causes](#) a deadly cancer called mesothelioma. Fotouhi's financial disclosure [report](#) shows he received nearly \$3.2 million in income from Gibson Dunn in 2024 as a partner. Fotouhi lists the following companies as sources of income: Aethon Energy Management, Air Products and Chemicals, Chevron, Cibolo Energy Partners, Energy Transfer Partners, Vistra Corp, Sunoco Pipeline, and ETC Northeast Pipeline, among others. Fotouhi has [agreed](#) to resign from activities involving his former firm and companies he has recently divested from.

**Aaron Szabo, Senior Advisor to the Administrator and Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation:** A former lobbyist, Szabo has previously [represented](#) the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers [and](#) American Petroleum Institute trade associations, along with [many other](#) fossil fuel trade groups and companies. During the first Trump administration, he worked at the White House

Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Management and Budget, where he [worked](#) on the repeal of numerous air quality rules and replaced them with weaker, industry-friendly versions. In a 2022 paper for the America First Policy Institute titled *"The Need to Refocus International Efforts on Traditional Air Pollutants,"* Szabo and his co-author [wrote](#) that "the damage that the myopic focus on climate change has done even within the environmental sphere is often overlooked, diverting attention and resources from critical avenues for real progress." Szabo's lobbying clients included [API](#), [American Chemistry Council](#), [Duke Energy](#), [TransCanada](#), [Exelon](#), and [Tellurian](#), per his lobbying disclosures. Szabo is also a credited contributor to the EPA chapter of Project 2025, but under questioning by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Szabo [repeatedly asserted that he had "no records"](#) of that work.

**Sean Donahue, General Counsel:** [Confirmed](#) by the Senate in May 2025 despite a thin record of legal work, Sean Donahue worked in the first Trump administration EPA for three years, then worked for a [regional law firm](#) in Buffalo, N.Y., and then for a solar energy company. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) [called](#) Donahue "a truly preposterous nominee" citing a lack of legal experience. "Mr. Donahue may be the most unfit nominee ever for any federal agency's general counsel," Whitehouse said, adding that "He has never tried a case to verdict, never taken a deposition, never signed a pleading, and never argued a motion. He has never personally litigated any case—let alone federal cases implicating our nation's most important environmental laws." At his confirmation hearing, [Donahue said](#) he worked for the law firm for 18 months before being fired. Donahue's partner, Trent Morse, works in the White House as [deputy director of presidential personnel](#) and is alumnus of the Trump-connected lobbying firm, [Ballard Partners](#). A Trump administration official [told Inside Climate News](#) that "There is no conflict of interest. Trent Morse recused himself from anything related to Sean Donahue. Administrator Zeldin selected Sean, who went through the exact same interview process as other candidates."

**Alex Dominguez, Deputy Assistant Administrator:** A former aide to Rep. Jim Renacci (R-OH) Dominguez worked at the EPA under the first Trump administration, then worked for the [American Petroleum Institute](#) lobbying the government against [electric vehicle subsidies and alternative fuels](#). He left API to work for the lobbying firm Massie Partners, where he [represented energy and biofuels clients including](#) NRG Energy, ONEOK, JERA Co and more. *E&E News* reported that Dominguez [recused himself](#) from work involving several former clients.

**Abigale Tardif, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation:** Tardif came to the EPA [straight from](#) a government affairs job with Marathon Petroleum, where she lobbied against [policies like](#) tailpipe emissions standards. She also [spent a year](#) with the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers trade group, which [partners](#) with Big Oil to [attack](#) climate and environmental

[regulations](#). Tardif worked for [Americans for Prosperity](#), a libertarian, [Koch-backed](#) think tank opposed to environmental action. While at the EPA, Tardif has joined with Aaron Szabo and others in decimating reporting requirements for polluters. In April, *ProPublica* [reported](#) that Tardif directed staff to write rules eliminating reporting requirements that mandate most industries to submit data to a federal program that [publicly records](#) the amount of carbon dioxide, methane, and other climate-warming gases emitted by individual facilities.

### ***Department of the Interior***

**William Doffermyre, Solicitor:** A former energy industry executive, Doffermyre was [confirmed](#) to be solicitor of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and is [currently](#) senior advisor to the National Energy Dominance Council. Prior to this nomination, he [served as](#) the senior director and general counsel of Lake Charles LNG, a planned gas export terminal being developed by Energy Transfer, which was founded by the oil billionaire and [close ally](#) of Trump, Kelcy Warren. *Politico* [reported](#) that Doffermyre received a \$790,000 severance payment from Energy Transfer, and that his salary at the company was no less than \$2.2 million. Per Doffermyre's [ethics agreement](#), he has agreed to not participate in matters involving Energy Transfer unless authorized to do so.

**Leslie Beyer, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management:** Beyer comes to the administration [from](#) Forum Energy Technologies, an [oilfield services company](#). Prior to that, Beyer [spent nearly](#) a decade at the Energy Workforce & Technology Council, a national trade association for energy tech with [leaders](#) from oil and gas companies like Halliburton and Chris Wright's own Liberty Energy. When she was nominated, WorldOil described Beyer as having [played](#) a "pivotal role in advancing the interests of the energy services sector and advocating for oil and gas as a driver of economic growth and energy security." Beyer was [confirmed](#) in September 2025.

**Adam Suess, Senior Counselor to the Secretary:** A former executive with REH Co, a branded gasoline and convenience store chain [formerly known](#) as Sinclair, Suess also [worked at](#) the gasoline wholesaling giant Murphy USA. While at REH, Suess was a lead attorney in the company's fight [against](#) the Biden EPA's renewable fuel standard, which sought to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. Suess served as acting assistant secretary for land and minerals management before the confirmation of [Beyer](#), another [oil and gas industry alumnus](#). Suess has been active in [lauding](#) the administration's proliferation, and attempted expediting, of oil and gas permits and mine approvals. The American Petroleum Institute has sung his praises in the role, [noting](#) that "Suess has taken critical steps to open access to future oil and natural gas development." Suess also [came under fire](#) over the administration's decision to block an under-construction wind farm project.

## Privatizing And Polluting Our Public Lands

America's public lands are under attack. In his first move as Secretary of the Interior, Burgum [signed a series of secretarial orders](#) intended to open up publicly owned lands and waters across America for the fossil fuel and mining industries to exploit them for corporate profit. These orders began the process of repealing crucial Biden administration regulations impacting drilling, and kicks off a process likely to [lead to an attack on places designated as national monuments](#) by previous administrations. The end result is likely to be a wholesale giveaway of public lands to oil and gas drillers and mining corporations – a process reminiscent of James Watt, a [privatization enthusiast](#) who was Interior Secretary under Ronald Reagan.

Burgum's vision of American energy "dominance" continues the MAGA movement's essential lie about U.S. energy policy. America's energy "potential" has already been unlocked due to a 15-year fracking boom that pushed production – and exports to foreign countries – to record levels. Burgum's Interior Department appears inclined to shrink or sell off public lands to fossil fuel interests and mining companies. At least six national monuments, managed in whole or in part by Interior's Bureau of Land Management, are [under threat of](#) reductions by the Trump Administration in order to [sell off](#) swaths of land to mining claims and oil and gas leasing under [a highly dubious](#) national "[energy emergency](#)." Burgum has worked aggressively to make expansion of renewable energy more difficult – a blatant gift to the fossil fuel interests who were generous benefactors to Trump's campaign.



the Trump Administration in order to [sell off](#) swaths of land to mining claims and oil and gas leasing under [a highly dubious](#) national "[energy emergency](#)." Burgum has worked aggressively to make expansion of renewable energy more difficult – a blatant gift to the fossil fuel interests who were generous benefactors to Trump's campaign.

The Trump administration's signature domestic policy legislation contained numerous giveaways to oil and gas behemoths, as well as massive public lands sales. The industry will receive about [\\$90 billion in tax subsidies](#) over the next decade, including about \$20 billion in new handouts provided under the new Republican tax and budget bill. On top of subsidies, the industry will be benefactors of other regulatory giveaways and handouts, including [opening 200 million acres](#) of national public lands to drilling, slashing royalties and other fees, cutting out opportunity for the public to comment on oil and gas leasing plans, and stripping out the government's ability to make decisions

about which acreage to [make available for exploitation](#). The bill also eliminates important reforms [enacted during the Biden administration](#) to better manage public lands and provide a fairer return to taxpayers.

At the start of Trump's second term, Tyler Hassen, [a former oil services company CEO](#), was [appointed to be the](#) Acting Assistant Secretary of Policy, Management, and Budget at the Interior Department. At DOI, Hassen [led](#) so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) operatives in their decimation of the department. Hassen was expected to [depart](#) the agency over the summer but as of mid-August [was reportedly still working](#) at Interior.

Hassen, previously [CEO](#) of oil rig company Basin Holdings, [helped orchestrate](#) a public relations stunt that sought to cast the planned resumption of services at a California water pumping plant as if it were a hallmark of DOGE's efficacy. Also during Hassen's tenure, [more than 2,000 people](#) were fired from the agency as of late February 2025. Since then, [thousands](#) more have been forced out, laid off, or have otherwise departed. The firings further endanger the department's [ability to](#) protect the health of Indigenous communities, ensure federal preparedness for wildfires on public lands, protect endangered species and threatened ecosystems and steward national parks.

Under Burgum, the Interior Department has moved to speed up fossil fuel companies' ability to drill on public lands, [adopted](#) new permitting procedures seeking to expedite approvals and further plans to [invoke](#) emergency powers to [reduce multi-year permitting processes down](#) to just 28 days. In May, Interior's Bureau of Land Management [released a memorandum](#) announcing that it would expedite oil and gas leasing on public lands by drastically [reducing](#) the average parcel review process from between eight and fifteen months to under six months. In June, Interior [moved to rescind](#) a [Biden-era rule](#) that restricted oil and gas development in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. The move would open [13 million acres](#) for more oil and gas drilling, [and](#) could destroy vulnerable habitat for caribou and [endanger](#) communities dependent on subsistence hunting in the state.

The [department also weakened](#) environmental protections that regulate offshore mineral exploration and development. The [policy changes](#) include undermining environmental review periods, extending permit durations, and [effectively giv\[ing\] polluters more time to operate without adequate oversight](#). All told, the moves make it easier for polluters to drill more, on more land, and at reduced cost, all while the public's opportunities to weigh in on the issue are increasingly degraded.

Under Burgum, Interior has been busy building industry wishlists for the privatization of public lands. In April, *Public Domain* [obtained](#) a draft strategic plan from the department [that](#) "reads like an industry wish list, boosting oil, gas and coal production and opening lands to development." Some of the plan's key provisions include opening Alaska [and](#) "other Federal lands for mineral extraction," "mapping out all Interior-held lands for

energy and minerals and quantifying their value," reducing costs for private land users on public lands, increasing private use of public land, and ultimately "increasing clean coal, oil, and gas production."

### **Spotlight: Legal Groundwork to Attack Public Lands**

**Lanora Pettit, Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice:** The Office of Legal Counsel is a crucially important subagency, charged with the provision of legal advice to the President and executive branch agencies on the legality of proposed actions, rulemakings, and policies. This advice is [considered binding](#) by the executive, and is often the final word on legal questions not resolved in courts. Trump has already moved to [undermine](#) the traditional mission of the office, which has typically been a check on the presidency. Instead, Pettit has used her role to find legal justifications for Trump's policy goals.

In May 2025, Pettit [set the stage](#) for what is likely to be a massive turnover of public lands to the private sector, publishing a 50-page [opinion](#) on the [Antiquities Act of 1906](#) declaring that the president can revoke national monument designations established by former presidents.

This opinion [flies in the face](#) of established law and gives Trump carte blanche authority to rescind such protections, reversing a 1938 legal opinion establishing that the president does not have the power to retract previous national monument designations, which are given to sites of historical and scientific significance.

Trump seems particularly intent on [abolishing or shrinking](#) several national monuments. That includes public lands in Arizona near the Grand Canyon [protected in 2023](#) after years of advocacy from tribal nations and public lands advocates, as well as [Bears Ears](#) and [Grand Staircase-Escalante](#) in Utah, which Trump [attempted to shrink](#) during his first term.

Pettit joined the DOJ from the Texas Attorney General's office, where she was [most recently](#) Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's Principal Deputy Solicitor. Pettit [started her career](#) as a law clerk at the Ninth Circuit, and worked for two law firms before heading to Paxton's office in 2019. Paxton has been entangled in numerous [scandals](#) in that [office](#), including alleged [misuse of office](#), [retaliatory firings](#), and [criminal misdeeds](#). Paxton is also [closely aligned](#) with the oil billionaire-backed Texas Public Policy Foundation and has routinely appeared at events for the group. Several members of TPPF's board have donated huge sums to Paxton's campaigns. Pettit has [also](#) appeared as counsel in cases also involving TPPF attorneys.

Pettit [argued dozens](#) of cases on behalf of Paxton, including against health care access, [reproductive autonomy](#), as well as against [core provisions](#) of the Clean Air Act in [Texas v. EPA](#). Pettit also [defended](#) Paxton's attempts to [disenfranchise](#) other states in the 2020 Presidential Election during his misconduct investigation before the Texas State Bar.

In 2023, when Texas Gov. Greg Abbott [deployed deadly](#) razor wire along with buoy blockades in the Rio Grande to terrify and terrorize immigrants, Pettit [defended](#) the state in a series of lawsuits challenging the legality of the move. When a federal judge appointed under President Ronald Reagan ruled against Texas, Pettit filed notice that the judge made [decisions](#) "based on unspecified 'voices' and 'chatter' he had picked up outside of the courtroom." The Judge [noted](#) that he had "never seen a letter like this filed," and that it could be seen as "'trying to influence the 5th Circuit' outside of the normal paths of legal procedure."

## Attacks On National Parks and National Monuments



Grand Tetons National Park, Wyoming (author photo)

The administration and its cronies are coordinating systematic attacks on the public lands and services that regular people have the most access to, and often [care the most about](#): national parks. The National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, housed within the Department of the Interior, is now [run on an acting basis](#) by Kevin Lilly, a former investment banker from Texas who ran the state's Alcoholic Beverage

Commission but appears to have no experience with natural resources, conservation, or wildlife management. A review of data by the National Parks Conservation Association found in July that the NPS's permanent staff declined by [24 percent](#) since January 2025, and that seasonal hiring during peak visitation was lagging with nearly [40 percent](#) of positions still unfilled.

The cuts create a dangerous dynamic at many parks, where there may not be enough staff on site to guarantee adequate safety infrastructure for visitors [who rely](#) on the service's [lifeguards](#), wildfire firefighters, and emergency rescue experts. The cuts also have devastating [impacts](#) on the NPS's educational services, conservation work, and stewardship of infrastructure on park lands, [like](#) visitor centers, bathrooms, campgrounds and trails.

Burgum's management of the Park Service is currently [under scrutiny](#) for his agency's handling of the [fires burning](#) near the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park, one of which destroyed a [historic lodge](#) in the park on July 12. Those fires are still burning as of mid-September with [questions](#) being [raised](#) about his agency's management – or lack thereof – of these critical services.

Unless the public pushes back on the Trump administration, corporations with profit motives may well push for resort developments for the extremely wealthy, turning cherished public spaces into Disney-esque commercial entertainment venues. Two former National Park Service leaders penned an op-ed in The Guardian in May [warning that](#) the Trump administration will move to privatize and commercialize national parks by arguing that they can be better-run by the private sector. They wrote:

*This is taking the people's parks and giving them over to corporations with profit motives that will push for resort developments for the extremely wealthy and ticketed bison petting zoos for the general public. Turning national parks into entertainment venues – a zipline down the Grand Canyon from where Roosevelt once stood, or an exclusive golf course in Yosemite valley."*

Other agencies are pursuing similar rollbacks for lands protections. In April 2025 the USDA's Forest Service [quietly rolled back](#) protections for two landscapes previously protected from mineral development. The move "puts a target on all national public lands, especially those with existing mining claims, industry interest, or presumed mineral resources," according to the Center for American Progress. Notably, under the first Trump Administration, mining claims in the Ruby Mountains were ultimately canceled in order to [foster](#) oil and gas development in the region, despite Trump's [own](#) "determination that the area has low to no potential for oil and gas and, generally, has low energy resource value."

The Trump administration has yet to eliminate national monument protections, or designations that restrict extraction in specific protected areas, but the Bureau of Land

Management has already started handing out a slate of gifts to the industry. In June, BLM [approved](#) a 74-mile underground natural gas pipeline between Helena and Three Forks, Montana. The approval took just [14 days](#), using a so-called expedited environmental review process the agency concocted to satisfy Trump's "energy emergency" under a new [process](#) that dodges public comment requirements. This process has been used to approve several other projects, including an expansion of a facility that loads oil for rail transportation along the Colorado River. A staff attorney with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance said of the [approval](#): "There is no energy emergency, plain and simple. Hidden behind a shroud of secrecy, the BLM has rushed through its approval of this massive oil shipping expansion project."

The comprehensive rollout of a fossil fuel industry agenda has been so successful, in part, because it was already mapped out. In May 2025, the America First Policy Institute bragged that [86 percent](#) of its flagship [America First Agenda](#) was advanced or enacted in Trump's first 100 days, including AFPI's wishlist for the fossil fuel industry. Project 2025 [laid the groundwork](#) for the avalanche of climate-calamitous policies pouring from this administration, with much of its priorities [already in effect](#).

## Key Corporate Cronies Selling Off Public Lands

### *Department of the Interior*

**Katharine MacGregor, Deputy Secretary:** MacGregor is in her second stint as the second-ranking official at the Interior Department. During the first Trump Administration, MacGregor became infamous as a conduit for [fossil fuel](#) and [mining](#) interests to realize their extractive agenda. In 2019, according to the investigative outlet [Reveal](#), MacGregor helped a former client of former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt secure oil and gas drilling permits from the Bureau of Land Management, though the company seeking the permits filed "deficient applications," and "was later feted with invitations to VIP events by the former client." A former Republican House staffer, MacGregor already was a well known friend of the energy industry: in recorded remarks at a June 2017 meeting, the Independent Petroleum Association of America's political director quipped that once MacGregor joined the Department of the Interior in January, "[We'll call Kate](#)" would become the association's default solution to regulatory roadblocks. After leaving the first Trump administration, MacGregor [worked](#) at Florida utility firm NextEra Energy.

**Karen Budd-Falen, Associate Deputy Secretary:** A Wyoming native and a longtime critic of federal land management policies, Karen Budd-Falen is a fifth-generation Wyoming rancher who has [dedicated her career](#) to [attacking public lands](#). "After decades working at the nexus of the antigovernment and anti-environmental movements, proposing illegitimate legal theories that routinely lose in courts, and ratcheting up anger and targeting federal land managers, Budd-Falen now has the power of a federal agency behind her," [wrote](#)

[the Southern Poverty Law Center](#), which researches extremist and militant groups. Budd-Falen has long [advocated](#) for the “county rights” or “county supremacy” movement, a fringe ideology that argues that county officials have the power to dictate what can be done on federal lands in their borders. “She has spent her career fighting against the very existence of U.S. public lands, filing frivolous lawsuits against the BLM, working to subvert public land managers, supporting unpopular efforts to dispose of public lands, and even aligning herself with fringe extremists,” [wrote](#) the Center for Western Priorities in 2017.

Budd-Falen was the [Acting Assistant Secretary](#) for the Department of the Interior until May 2025, and was appointed as an [Associate Deputy Secretary](#) of the agency in March. She [claimed](#) in 2011 that the Endangered Species Act is “used as a sword to tear down the American economy, drive up food, energy and housing costs and wear down and take out rural communities and counties.” Budd-Falen also [represented](#) a group of Nevada ranchers including the anti-government rancher Cliven Bundy in [a case about endangered species protections](#).

[Previously](#), Budd-Falen was a co-owner of a law firm in Wyoming with her husband, which “mainly represents private property owners, ranching and farming organizations, and local governments.” Budd-Falen is also an alumnus of the Reagan Administration’s Interior Department, and a former attorney for the conservative Mountain States Legal Foundation. Mountain States Legal’s longtime leader was William Perry Pendley, a [Project 2025 contributor](#), and former official in both the Reagan administration and first Trump administration. In a 2024 [op-ed](#), Pendley called for selling off public lands as a purported solution to America’s housing shortage — a [highly misleading](#) policy idea now picked up by the second Trump administration.

**William Groffy, Principal Deputy Director and Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management:** A longtime oil and gas veteran, [Groffy](#) is the Bureau of Land Management’s [Principal Deputy Director](#) and current Acting Director heading up the Interior Department bureau charged with managing oil and gas leasing and permitting. The Trump administration’s initial nominee to lead the agency, Kathleen Sgamma, [withdrew](#) her nomination after her criticisms of January 6 insurrectionists and Trump himself surfaced. Groffy has spent his career [advocating](#) for the interests of the oil and gas industry. He began working at Marathon Oil in 2008, where he worked in government relations and regulatory compliance. After his time at Marathon, he stayed in the industry [working](#) as an analyst at Ovintiv Inc. and its predecessor companies.

In 2022, Groffy [joined](#) the Colorado Oil & Gas Association (COGA) as a Senior Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs. COGA has a long history of [downplaying](#) the health and environmental hazards of its members’ activities,

including by [publishing](#) claims about how the Colorado oil and gas industry is among the “cleanest and least polluting” in the country. This claim ignores serious air pollution issues in Colorado—[80 percent](#) of the state’s residents live with unhealthy air and three cities are among the top 20 most polluted in the nation, according to the American Lung Association. Despite the smog pervading Colorado, COGA [routinely excoriates](#) clean air regulations. Groffy [railed against](#) legislation seeking to address Colorado’s ozone problem and [testified against pipeline safety](#) legislation after a state performance audit published “[egregious findings](#)” of oversight and enforcement failures. Groffy also [testified in support](#) of an oil and gas project in Aurora, Colorado, that would require the use of 4.4 trillion gallons of water, during a period in which residents were coping with [drought restrictions](#).

## Sabotaging Renewables, Subsidizing Polluters

*"We will not approve wind or farmers destroying solar. The days of stupidity are over in the USA!!! MAGA" - President Donald Trump in a July 2025 [social media post](#).*

Before the start of the second Trump administration, [centrist commentators](#) confidently [asserted](#) that Burgum and Wright would exert their influence to favor an "all of the above" energy strategy that leaves room for both fossil fuels and renewables. Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM), the top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee [voted to confirm Burgum](#) and called him a "[talented nominee](#)." Similarly, Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO) fawned over Wright during confirmation proceedings, calling [him](#) a "key innovator" and "successful entrepreneur." They had some reason to be optimistic: As North Dakota, governor, Burgum presided over a [50 percent increase](#) in wind power.



Donald J. Trump    
@realDonaldTrump

Any State that has built and relied on WINDMILLS and SOLAR for power are seeing RECORD BREAKING INCREASES IN ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY COSTS. THE SCAM OF THE CENTURY! We will not approve wind or farmer destroying Solar. The days of stupidity are over in the USA!!! MAGA

**12.1k** ReTruths **50.7k** Likes 8/20/25, 9:51 AM

Hopes for this sort of approach proved short lived. Just a few months later, Burgum and Wright and other top Trump administration officials are now actively undermining renewables and openly favoring coal. Both cabinet secretaries now echo Trump's personal animosity toward renewable energy, especially wind power. Even at the Energy Department's own renewables office, staffers have been told to avoid the words "climate change," decarbonization and "green," "sustainable" and "emissions" according to a [directive](#) obtained by Politico.

Even Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, has been [trying to stave off](#) the administration's attacks on offshore wind, but Trump has been adamant in his distaste for the sector. "I don't want windmills destroying our place," Trump [told Fox News](#) in a June interview. "I don't want these solar things where they go for miles and they cover up a half a mountain that are ugly as hell." In a July 2025 interview, Trump [said](#), "We will

not allow a windmill to be built in the United States. They're killing us. They're killing the beauty of our scenery." Trump even posted on his Truth Social account that "we will not approve wind or farmer-destroying solar," [falsely claiming](#) that renewables are to blame for increasing electricity prices.

These actions, which align with Project 2025's [mandate](#) to abandon the Biden administration's offshore wind goals, have halted offshore wind projects and threatened [thousands of jobs](#). Offshore wind is particularly vulnerable to the administration's whims as offshore wind farms are located in federal waters, which are overseen by the Department of the Interior and subject to numerous federal permits and approvals. "The impression they're leaving, which I think is the truth, is that they're grasping at straws," said John Leshy, who served as general counsel for the Interior Department during the Clinton administration, [told the New York Times](#).

An overview of the Trump administration's attacks on renewables in 2025:

### January

- A first day [executive order](#) from the White House in January halted all future and ongoing offshore wind permitting and leasing and called for a comprehensive review of all federal wind leasing and permitting practices.

### March

- The EPA [revoked](#) a permit for the now-defunct Atlantic Shores offshore wind project off the New Jersey coast.

### April

- The Interior Department issued a sudden [stop-work order](#) for New York's Empire Wind 1, a project under development for [14 years](#).

### May

- The Interior Department [withdrew](#) a Biden-era legal opinion to make the fishing industry a higher priority than offshore wind.
- The Trump administration [lifted the pause](#) on Empire Wind after New York Gov. Kathy Hochul agreed to support a controversial natural gas pipeline.

### June

- Public Citizen filed a [protest](#) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission of the New York pipeline-wind farm deal. The protest argued that the natural gas pipeline being restarted after Hochul agreed to support it violates the public

interest and should be blocked, citing a “shakedown involving unlawful abuse of powers by the Trump Administration and the State of New York.”

### July

- The Department of Transportation [reversed](#) Biden administration decisions to allow wind turbines near highways and railroads, requiring them to be at least 1.2 miles away, citing unfounded concerns about interference with radio frequencies.
- Interior established a new policy saying Burgum [must personally review](#) “ all actions related to wind and solar energy, including minor procedural steps that would not typically rise to such a senior level, giving Burgum the power to bog down projects.
- The Interior Department issued an order requesting reports and new recommendations on permitting and decisionmaking offshore wind in relation to the environment, wildlife, national security, tribal lands and other issues, setting up justification to revoke permits for already approved projects.
- The Transportation Department also [said](#) that the Federal Aviation Administration “will thoroughly evaluate proposed wind turbines to ensure they do not pose a danger to aviation.”
- The Energy Department terminated a \$4.9 billion [federal loan guarantee](#) to an electric transmission project known as the Grain Belt Express, that would bring wind energy generated in Kansas to big cities.
- The EPA [challenged](#) a permit for an offshore wind farm in Maryland, claiming it found an [error](#) in a state permit decision.
- The Interior Department’s Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [revoked](#) all designations of the areas being considered for offshore wind development.

### August

- Interior issued an [order](#) declaring that the agency would analyze the amount of energy generated per acre for energy projects on public lands. Doing so gives an advantage to gas, nuclear and coal-fired power plants rather than wind farms and utility scale solar projects, which, by definition, are spread out on large plots of land.
- Interior [canceled](#) the Lava Ridge wind farm project in Idaho and issued an order [cracking down](#) on bald eagle deaths caused by wind turbines.
- EPA secretary Lee Zeldin said he would [cancel](#) a \$7 billion national solar grant program.

- Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins [announced](#) a halt to wind and solar programs for farms.
- Interior [moved to halt](#) the nearly completed Revolution Wind project off Rhode Island on purported national security concerns. Burgum [claimed](#) that offshore wind farms could hamper the ability to detect an undersea [drone attack](#) on the U.S. The project developer and two New England states [filed court challenges](#).
- The Commerce Department set the stage for new [tariffs](#) on offshore wind supply chains, based on an [investigation](#) into whether imports of offshore wind turbine and component parts imports compromise national security
- The Transportation Department [revoked](#) nearly \$680 million in federal infrastructure [funding for ports](#) intended to support the offshore wind. One major marine terminal project in Humboldt Bay, Calif. had been [under fire](#) from an anti-wind group.

### September

- In a court filing the Interior Department said it would revoke a permit for the [New England Wind project](#) off Massachusetts.
- The White House instructed [six federal agencies](#) to draft their own plans to thwart the offshore wind industry, including tapping the Department of Health and Human Services, led by [longtime wind energy opponent](#) Robert F. Kennedy to review the offshore wind industry, including many dubious claims about environmental and marine life impacts.
- The Trump administration [asked a federal judge](#) to cancel the Biden administration's 2025 approval of a wind farm off the coast of Maryland.
- The Trump administration filed a court motion to [revoke the approval](#) of the SouthCoast Wind project off Massachusetts.
- A federal judge ordered the [restart](#) of the Revolution Wind project.

The Trump administration's sweeping attack on the renewables industry flies in the face of the longstanding conservative talking point that the government should not pick winners and losers in the marketplace. Instead, it is entirely in sync with the agenda of [fossil fuel backed](#) think tanks. For example, the Texas Public Policy Foundation [sued](#) the Biden administration while seeking to block an offshore wind farm and produced a [documentary](#) in which commercial fishermen criticized offshore wind.

All [six plaintiff organizations](#) in TPPF's Vineyard Wind suit were members of, or connected to, the Responsible Offshore Development Association, an anti-wind fishing industries organization whose founder is [now](#) the general counsel for the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In summer 2025, TPPF, acting on behalf of fishing interests, [filed](#) a [petition](#) with six federal agencies seeking to block a wind farm project off the Massachusetts coast.

The Republican budget bill passed in July repeals most of President Joe Biden's signature Inflation Reduction Act, slashing incentives for renewable energy, electric vehicles and home energy conservation. One of the key [advocates](#) influencing GOP lawmakers' decision to rapidly terminate renewable subsidies was Alex Epstein, a right wing [pundit](#) and fossil fuel cheerleader who authored "*The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels*" and led a dishonest public relations campaign to [blame renewables](#) for the deadly 2021 [Texas Freeze](#), despite ample evidence contradicting that false claim.

### Spotlight: The Political Aide Attacking Renewables

Jarrold Agen has been one of the key faces of the Trump administration's energy policy and its attack on renewables. But Agen's public statements and rhetoric are filled with numerous statements that are dubious at best.

During the first Trump administration, Agen worked as a top aide and [spokesman for](#) former Vice President Mike Pence and now is executive director of Trump's National Energy Dominance Council. A [marketing and public relations executive](#) and longtime Republican public affairs official, Agen is also an alum of Lockheed Martin, where he worked in marketing and advertising. Agen has no public record of energy sector experience.



Jarrold Agen, executive director of Trump's National Energy Dominance Council, appears in a Politico [interview](#).

Many of Agen's statements about energy are misleading. Agen [claimed](#) in a *Politico* interview that renewables "can't stand on their own feet" because they are supported by tax breaks."

"The president is not focused on wind and solar," Agen [told Politico](#). "They haven't proven that they can get off the ground."

Statements like these ignore the rapidly declining costs of renewables and the massive, longstanding, subsidies that have propped up the U.S. oil and gas industry for decades, now valued [at about \\$35 billion per year](#). Besides its massive tax benefits, the fossil fuel industry also passes along huge costs to the public, including more than [\\$820 billion](#) in annual health costs that result from fossil-fuel generated air pollution and climate change in the U.S.

Despite the administration's rhetoric, renewables – especially solar and battery storage – are booming, making up about 90 percent of [new U.S. generation added in 2025](#).

## Key Corporate Cronies Sabotaging Renewables

### *Department of Commerce*

**Annie Hawkins, General Counsel for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:** Annie Hawkins is the [General Counsel](#) for NOAA, advising on environmental protection, permitting, and resource management activities, as well as representing the agency in litigation and negotiations. NOAA, which previously did extensive scientific work and communication on climate change has been frequently in the Trump's administration's [crosshairs](#), with massive [layoffs](#) and [budget cuts](#).

Hawkins formerly led the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA), a commercial fishing industries organization which she founded in 2017. RODA and Hawkins are [anti-wind](#), and have spent years fighting offshore wind projects [including](#) the Vineyard Wind, Revolution Wind, and South Fork wind projects. Correspondence obtained through a public records request by E&E News indicates that [Hawkins was included](#) in an [email about the Empire Wind project](#) in New York, which the Interior Department halted, then allowed in spring 2025.

RODA is at the heart of the [anti-wind](#) activist ecosystem, according to a 2023 report from Brown University's Climate and Development Lab. That [study found](#) that RODA has pursued significant collaboration with the [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#) in its routine attacks on wind and other renewables. RODA, TPPF, and the rest of the corporate opponents of wind development are surely thrilled given the Trump Administration's [indefinite pause](#) on offshore wind leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf, even while it continues to expedite approval processes for new oil and gas drilling in public waters and on public lands.

## ***Department of Energy***

**Audrey Robertson, Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy:** [Nominated](#) to lead the Energy Department's energy efficiency and renewables efforts, Robertson has [no background in renewable energy](#) but co-founded the oil and gas company, [Franklin Mountain Energy](#), which was [sold](#) to Coterra Energy in 2025. As first [reported](#) by Axios, Robertson [donated a total of \\$100,000](#) to the Republican National Committee in July 2025 as she awaited confirmation. Robertson also worked at energy private equity firm Kayne Anderson, and has served on the board of several other oil and gas companies, including that of Energy Secretary Wright's former firm [Liberty Energy](#). In a January 2025 [enforcement notice](#), the Environmental Protection Agency alleged that Franklin Mountain Energy violated the Clean Air Act, after EPA and New Mexico investigators identified [widespread emissions violations](#) among several companies. In her confirmation hearing, Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM) expressed [concern](#) about whether Robertson would derail energy efficiency and appliance regulation and [pressed her](#) on the use of batteries to stabilize power grids. Robertson has agreed to [recuse from](#) activities involving Liberty Energy, Franklin Mountain Energy, and more.

## ***Department of the Interior***

**Matt Giacona Principal Deputy Director of the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management:** Giacona is the Principal Deputy Director, and [current Acting Director](#), of the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management, which oversees offshore oil and gas drilling activities in U.S. waters. Giacona, who was still a [Capitol Hill intern](#) at the start of the first Trump administration, worked as a [lobbyist](#) at the National Ocean Industries Association, an [offshore drilling industry](#) lobby group. NOIA's Board of Directors includes such [Big Oil heavyweights](#) as Chevron, BP America, Exxon, TotalEnergies, and Shell. While at NOIA, Giacona [lobbied](#) on issues like the Endangered Species Act, leasing schedules, and other permitting issues. *Public Domain* [reported](#) in June that Giacona has been working on many of these same issues at BOEM, meeting in an official capacity with his former clients and former employer on policy issues. However, they are not always in agreement. NOIA's members include wind power companies as well as offshore drilling firms. The trade group [criticized](#) BOEM's [issued](#) a stop-work [order](#) on the Revolution Wind offshore project off the New England coast so the federal government, saying that the project is "already under construction and nearly complete, representing years of planning, billions in private investment, and significant progress for America's offshore energy supply chain."

## Conclusion

To execute his extreme, reckless backward-looking fossil fuel agenda, Trump has stocked his administration with corporate allies, donors, and camera-ready spokespeople ready to spout MAGA talking points. This strategy builds on that of his first term in office, when Trump installed corporate cabinet secretaries such as Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson at the State Department and lobbyists [Andrew Wheeler](#) and [David Bernhardt](#), who made it their mission to roll back environmental regulations and massively expand oil and gas production.

The officials running Trump's second administration, as well as Trump himself, have been far swifter and more aggressive in enacting favors for allies in the fossil fuel and mining industries. They have also set in motion an avalanche of attacks on Trump's perceived enemies and the industries he disfavors, including renewable energy. Taken as a whole, these policies aid the fossil fuel industry's exploitation of the public sphere for private profit while simultaneously stifling its competition and ceding leadership in the [clean technologies of the future](#) to other countries.