Agency Staff Tracker: Department of Veterans Affairs

Regulatory powers, organizational structure & key decision-makers

October 18, 2017
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Understanding the Agency Staff Tracker

The Agency Staff Tracker is a tool to help navigate the transition period in the new administration. Each deck corresponds to a federal department and tracks presidential appointments and nominations through the entire confirmation process. Use the Agency Staff Tracker as a resource to quickly identify the key decision-makers in federal agencies.

Roadmap
- Brief overview of department: mission, history, regulatory powers
- "Day one" issues for the administration
- Organizational chart
- Nomination tracker + in-depth nominee profiles
- Key decision-makers at the agency level + brief profiles

What to expect
The initial round of Agency Staff Trackers will be published for each cabinet department before expanding to independent agencies (EPA, SBA, etc.). Current organizational charts and nomination lists will be expanded as the decks are updated.

Department of Veterans Affairs
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Department of Veterans Affairs

Overview

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is a cabinet-level federal department responsible for coordinating and administrating benefits programs for military veterans and their families. The department has three main divisions: the Veterans Health Administration, which provides medical services through hospitals and other facilities; the Veterans Benefit Administration, which provides other non-medical benefits such as loan-guarantees and educational funds; and the National Cemetery Administration, which oversees veterans cemeteries and memorial services.

Mission

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.

History

National assistance programs for veterans have existed since the Revolutionary War, but the VA's modern organization has its foundation in the post-World War I era, when the number of veterans returning from war rapidly grew. The GI Bill, first signed by FDR in 1944 and modified over the years, provides occupational, financial and educational benefits to veterans. President Reagan promoted the VA to cabinet-level status in 1988, and the department currently runs 152 hospitals, 800 community clinics, 126 nursing homes, and 35 domiciliaries.

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Important Legislation

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers many benefit programs authorized by Congress.

Some of the main laws that authorize VA programs are:
• The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Original G.I. Bill)
• The Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1984
• The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistant Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 G.I. Bill)
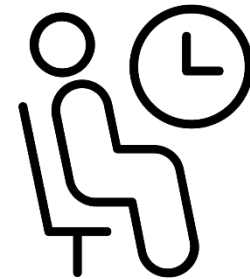• The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014

Additionally, the department is authorized to modify its programs for the proper functioning of its loan-guarantee and educational assistance programs, as well as its many hospitals and clinics.

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs

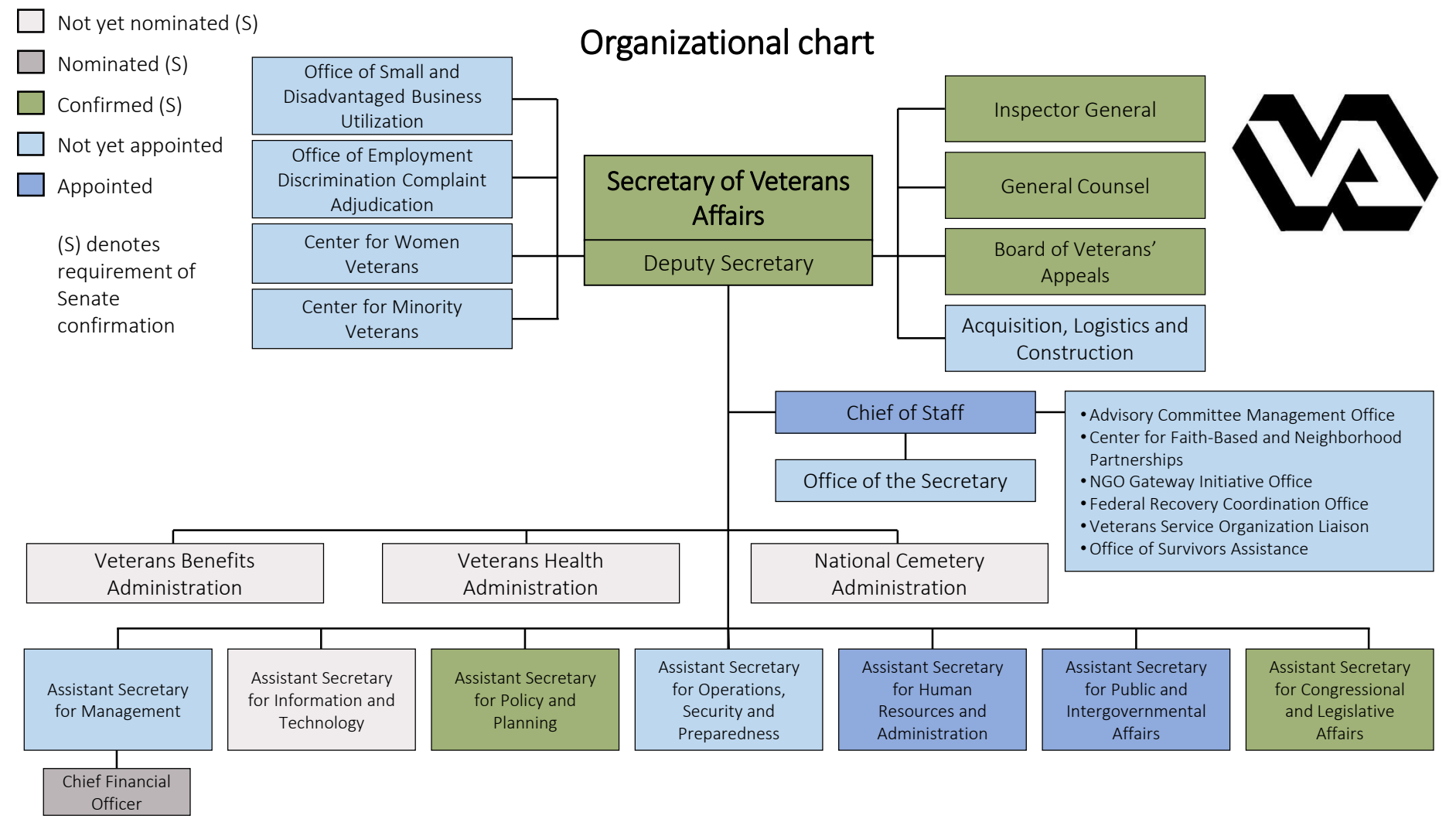## "Day one" issues for the new administration

Wait times

Scandal struck the Obama administration in 2014 when it was reported that many veterans were dying while waiting long periods of time to see a doctor. Obama signed legislation in 2014 that provided funding for veterans to see non-VA physicians if a VA facility was not within 40 miles of the veteran's residence.

Privatization

Trump has pledged to allow veterans to seek treatment at a facility of their choosing, whether it is VA-run or private, but his pick for secretary of the VA has openly opposed "privatization" of the VA.

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Organizational chart

Not yet nominated (S)

Nominated (S)

Confirmed (S)

Not yet appointed

Appointed

(S) denotes requirement of Senate confirmation

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

Center for Women Veterans

Center for Minority Veterans

Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Deputy Secretary

Inspector General

General Counsel

Board of Veterans' Appeals

Acquisition, Logistics and Construction

Chief of Staff

Office of the Secretary

- Advisory Committee Management Office
- Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
- NGO Gateway Initiative Office
- Federal Recovery Coordination Office
- Veterans Service Organization Liaison
- Office of Survivors Assistance

Veterans Benefits Administration

Veterans Health Administration

National Cemetery Administration

Assistant Secretary for Management

Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology

Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning

Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness

Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs

Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs

Chief Financial Officer

Boxes corresponding to divisions, rather than positions, refer to the head of said division

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nomination tracker

Position	Obama Administration	Trump Administration	Status
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Robert McDonald (Confirmed 7/30/14)	David Shulkin	Nominated (1/11/17) Confirmed (2/13/17)
Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Sloan Gibson IV (Confirmed 2/11/14)	Thomas Bowman	Nominated (6/22/17) Confirmed (8/3/17)
Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals	Vacant	Cheryl L. Mason	Nominated (9/1/17) Confirmed (11/8/17)
General Counsel	Leigh Bradley (Confirmed 12/16/2014)	James Byrne	Nominated (6/22/17) Confirmed (8/3/17)
Chief Financial Officer	Vacant	Jon J. Rychalski	Nominated (10/13/17)
Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning	Linda Schwartz (Confirmed 9/16/2014)	Melissa Sue Glynn	Nominated (8/1/17) Confirmed (11/8/17)
Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs	Vacant	Brooks Tucker	Nominated (5/12/17) Confirmed (8/3/17)
Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology	Laverne Council (Confirmed 6/23/2015)	Rob Thomas Jr. (Acting)	

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nomination tracker

Position	Obama Administration	Trump Administration	Status
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs	Vacant	Randy Reeves	Nominated (9/2/17) Confirmed (11/8/17)
Under Secretary for Benefits	Vacant	Thomas Murphy (Acting)	
Under Secretary for Health	Dr. David Shulkin (Confirmed 6/23/2015)	Poonam Alaigh (Acting)	
Inspector General	Michael Joseph Missal (Confirmed 4/19/2016)	Michael Joseph Missal	
Chief of Staff	Vacant	Vivieca Wright-Simpson	Appointed (2/27/17)
Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs	Rosemary Williams (Appointed)	John Ullyot	Appointed (3/30/17)
Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness	Vacant	Kevin Hanretta (Acting)	
Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration	Vacant	Peter Shelby	Appointed (6/5/17)

Sources: Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: David Shulkin

David Shulkin, MD

Position: Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Biography

Dr. Shulkin currently serves as the under secretary of health, the chief executive of all the VA's hospitals, clinics and other medical facilities. He was appointed to the Senate-confirmed position by Obama in 2015. Shulkin has an extensive background as a hospital administrator as well as a practicing physician. He previously was president and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, chief medical officer of the University of Pennsylvania Health System and president of the Atlantic Health System Accountable Care Organization, among other positions. He received his medical degree from the Medical College of Pennsylvania (now a part of Drexel University) and completed his residency at the University of Pittsburgh Presbyterian Medical Center. In the Senate hearing for his nomination to VA secretary, he promised major reforms to the VA, with improved access and expanded care options. He also noted that he opposed President Trump's preference for privatizing parts of the VA.

Date of birth

June 22, 1959 (Age: 57)

Education

Hampshire College, BA 1982
Drexel University, MD 1986

Occupation

Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health

Confirmation status

Nominated 1/11/17	Senate hearing 2/1/17	Confirmed 2/13/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; Department of Veterans Affairs; Leo Shan III, "Trump pick David Shulkin vows to reform – not privatize – VA services," Military Times, February 1, 2017.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Thomas G. Bowman

Thomas G. Bowman

Position: Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Biography

Prior to his confirmation as deputy secretary, Thomas Bowman served as the majority staff director of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Since 2005, Bowman has held several leadership roles in the Department of Veterans Affairs, including acting assistant secretary for the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, deputy chief of staff and chief of staff. Before joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, Bowman served in the Marine Corps, from which he retired after 30 years of service.

Date of birth

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Education

University of Texas, BA
Western New England College, JD

Occupation

Majority staff director of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee

Confirmation status

Nominated 6/22/17	Senate hearing 7/19/17	Confirmed 8/3/17

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: James Byrne

James Byrne

Position: General Counsel

Biography

James Byrne has most recently served as the associate general counsel and chief privacy officer at Lockheed Martin Corporation. Byrne has worked in the public sector for over 20 years, including time as a Marine infantry officer, an international narcotics prosecutor at the DOI, the senior executive service deputy special counsel with the Office of the United States Special Counsel and both the general counsel and assistant inspector general for investigations with the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

Date of birth

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Education

U.S. Naval Academy, BS
Stetson University College of Law, JD

Occupation

Associate General Counsel and Chief Privacy Officer at Lockheed Martin Corporation

Confirmation status

Nominated 6/22/17	Senate hearing 7/19/17	Confirmed 8/3/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov, June 22, 2017.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Appointee: Vivieca Wright-Simpson

Vivieca Wright-Simpson

Position: Chief of Staff

Biography

Prior to assuming her duties as chief of staff of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Wright-Simpson served as the chief of staff of the Veterans Health Administration. During her 32 years of service to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Wright-Simpson also held positions as the executive director of the Office of Network Support and the health system specialist for the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management.

Date of birth

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Education

Tennessee State University, BS
Meharry Medical College, MPH

Occupation

Chief of Staff of the Veterans
Health Administration

Appointment status

Appointed
2/27/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; Department of Veterans Affairs.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Brooks D. Tucker

Brooks D. Tucker

Position: Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs

Biography

Brooks D. Tucker has previously served as the senior adviser to the secretary of veterans affairs. He has served previously as a policy adviser on the Presidential Transition Team and as a senior policy advisor on national security and veterans' affairs for Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC). Prior to working in the public sector, Tucker was an investment adviser with Deutsche Bank and Merrill Lynch, and he also retired as a lieutenant colonel and infantry officer in the Marine Corps.

Date of birth

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Education

University of Maryland, BA

Occupation

Senior adviser to the secretary of veterans affairs

Confirmation status

Nominated 5/12/17	Senate hearing 7/19/17	Confirmed 8/3/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; Department of Veterans Affairs; whitehouse.gov, May 12, 2017; LinkedIn.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Appointee: John Ullyot

John Ullyot

Position: Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs

Biography

Prior to joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, John Ullyot held several roles related to strategic counsel, media relations and issues and management in both the public and private sectors. During the 2016 election, Ullyot served as the director of communications, caucus operations for the Trump team, after which he took on the role of deputy national political director for communications on Trump's campaign. A former intelligence officer and scout sniper platoon commander in the U.S. Marine Corps, Ulloyot has also previously served as director of communications of the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Date of birth

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Education

Harvard University, BA

Occupation

Managing Partner at Brighton Strategy Group

Appointment status

Appointed
3/30/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Appointee: Peter Shelby

Peter Shelby

Position: Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

Biography

Before accepting his position in the Department of Veterans Affairs, Peter Shelby was principal and founder of Transcendent Performance, an HR and talent development consulting practice. Prior to this, he worked as a senior vice president with Related Companies in New York City. Shelby also has experience in the public sector, serving in several leadership roles in the intelligence community, including associate dean at National Intelligence University and deputy for learning and development for the Defense Intelligence Agency. A veteran of the Marine Corps, Shelby holds an MBA in human resources management from Northcentral University, an MA in adult education from George Mason University and a BA in English literature from The Citadel.

Date of birth

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Education

The Citadel, BA
George Mason University, MA
Northcentral University, MBA

Occupation

Principal and founder of Transcendent Performance

Appointment status

Appointed
6/16/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov.

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Melissa Sue Glynn

Melissa Sue Glynn

Position: Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning

Biography

Prior to joining the Department of Veterans Affairs, Melissa Sue Glynn led Alvarez and Marsal's public sector practice, focusing on improving the delivery of government programs as well as K-12 and higher education. Before entering the public sector, Glynn was a principal with PwC and was responsible for the consulting firm's work with the Department of Veterans Affairs. She has also served as co-director of the Center for the Management of Information at the University of Arizona, and was a principal investigator on a cooperative grant from the NSF and several programs funded by defense research laboratories.

Date of birth

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Education

Rutgers University, BA
University of Arizona, MA, PhD

Occupation

Managing director and public sector leader at Alvarez and Marsal

Confirmation status

Nominated 8/1/17	Senate hearing 10/4/17	Confirmed 11/8/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov; LinkedIn.

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Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Cheryl L. Mason

Cheryl L. Mason

Position: Chairman of the Board of Veterans Appeals

Biography

Cheryl Mason currently serves as the interim principal deputy vice chairman at the Board of Veterans Appeals. She has previously served in several positions within the Department of Veterans Affairs, including as deputy vice chairman, chief veterans law judge, veterans law judge and counsel at the Board of Veterans Appeals. Mason has also served as an attorney with the Federal Labor Relations Authority, and she was a contract attorney investigator for the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, specializing in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Before entering the public sector, Mason was an attorney at a private practice in Omaha, Nebraska.

Date of birth

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Education

Ohio Northern University, BA
Creighton University School of Law, JD

Occupation

Principal deputy vice chairman at the Board of Veterans Appeals

Confirmation status

| Nominated 9/2/17 | Senate hearing 10/4/17 | Confirmed 11/8/17 |

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov; LinkedIn.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Randy Reeves

Randy Reeves

Position: Undersecretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs

Biography

Randy Reeves currently serves as the executive director of the Mississippi Veterans Affairs Board as well as the president of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs. Reeves is a retired commander and surface warfare officer in the U.S. Navy. Prior to joining the Naval forces, Reeves was an enlisted airman in the U.S. Air Force.

Date of birth

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Education

Peru State College, BA, MA

Occupation

Executive director of the Mississippi Veterans Affairs Board

Confirmation status

Nominated 9/2/17	Senate hearing 10/4/17	Confirmed 11/8/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov; LinkedIn.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Nominee: Jon J. Rychalski

Jon J. Rychalski

Position: Chief Financial Officer

Biography

Jon Rychalski currently serves as the health affairs deputy assistant secretary of defense (DASD) for health budgets and financial policy. In this position, Rychalski develops and maintains financial portfolios that support the Military Health System's "strategic imperatives." He also leads budget development for direct care to both military hospitals and clinics as well as private sector programs. Prior to joining the Military Health System, Rychalski was commissioned in the Air Force Medical Service Corps, where he held several positions including patient administration officer and resource management officer. Rychalski worked in the civilian health care consulting industry before he joined government agencies.

Date of birth

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Education

Carroll College, BA
National College, BS
State University of New York, MS

Occupation

Deputy assistant secretary of defense for health budgets & financial policy

Confirmation status

Nominated
10/13/17

Sources: National Journal Research, 2017; "Tracking how many key positions Trump has filled so far," The Washington Post, August 17, 2017; whitehouse.gov; LinkedIn; Health.mil.