



Life In Brief

Current Title: Secretary of Health & Human Services

Political Party: Republican Party

Born: June 17, 1967

Birthplace: Johnstown, PA

Ethnicity: White/Caucasian

Marital Status: Married

Education:

- Dartmouth College (NH), AB, 1988
- Yale Law School (CT), JD, 1991

Family:

2 children

Work History:

- Law Clerk for Judge J. Michael Luttig, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, 1991-1992
- Law Clerk for Associate Justice Antonin Scalia, Supreme Court of the United States, 1992-1993
- Associate Independent Counsel for Kenneth W. Starr, Office of the Independent Counsel, 1994-1996
- Associate, advancing to Partner, Wiley Rein, 1996-2001
- General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services, 2001-2005
- Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Communications, Eli Lilly & Company, 2007-2009
- Vice President, Eli Lilly & Company, U.S. Managed Healthcare Services and the Puerto Rico affiliate, 2009-2012

- President, Lilly USA, LLC, a division of Eli Lilly & Company, 2012-2017
- Chairman and Founder, Seraphim Strategies, LLC, 2017-2017
- Health and Human Services Secretary, 2017-present

Quick Summary

While his conservative legal background and pharmaceutical executive experience inform a limited government vision for the health care system, Azar has sought pragmatic solutions working for a president untied to Republican health care orthodoxy

- Clerked for Supreme Court Justice Scalia before investigating the Clintons in Ken Starr's independent council office
- Held high-level posts in the Bush Administration's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) before taking top lobbying role with Eli Lilly
- Lilly USA increased insulin prices under Azar
- Affordable Care Act (ACA) critic believes free market principles of choice and competition can lower health insurance lower costs
- Publicly endorses policies at odds with his previous stances and former industry
- Implemented measures with bipartisan approval to reduce opioid-related deaths

Approach and Motivations

Combines conservative philosophy with accommodation on drug pricing; counterbalance to more ideological White House advisors

- Internalized principle that government action often leads to "diminished markets" as a law



student; seeks to deregulate and decentralize health care market based on this axiom

- Guided by belief that price availability for consumers will lead to lower health care prices
- Former pharma executive has endorsed measured approach to lowering drug prices, while urging Trump away from more drastic proposals favored by Democrats
- Resists more ideological WH advisors in policy debates, including Domestic Policy Council Director Joe Grogan and former Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney

position; requires Canadian participation and faces significant hurdles

- Rule finalized in 2019 allows Medicare Advantage plans to use “step therapy” (requiring patients to start treatment with cheaper drugs before moving to more expensive options) for Part B drugs, with modest projected cost savings
- Introduced a rule in 2019 requiring drug companies to disclose the price of prescription drugs in advertising; struck down in federal court

Policy Position and Areas of Focus

Azar is one of the faces of Trump Administration health insurance, prescription drug, and opioid policy

Health Insurance: *Reforming the system through choice and competition*

- Criticizes the ACA as a costly and destabilizing expansion of a broken, government-driven system; has opposed full repeal of the law due to lack of a Republican alternative
- Believes enhanced competition and price transparency for consumers are the keys to lowering health care costs
- Working to transition Medicare and Medicaid to a value-based system, where providers are reimbursed based on outcomes instead of fee-for-service

Prescription Drugs: *Attempting to lower prices through HHS rule changes*

- Supports allowing states to import prescription drugs from Canada, reversing his previous

Opioid Addiction: *Tackling urgent public health crisis through measures with bipartisan support*

- Implementing Trump Administration “5-Point Strategy” against opioid crisis; HHS has funneled billions to local communities
- Supports “harm reduction” strategies, including increasing naloxone prescriptions

Core Communities

Communities mirror career trajectory, from conservative law to the pharmaceutical industry

Conservative Law: *Relationships with high-profile conservative jurists and influential legal society propelled career*

- Clerked for conservative circuit judges Alex Kozinski (9th) and J. Michael Luttig (4th) and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; called himself a “devoted protégé of Justice Scalia”
- Worked for Independent Council Ken Starr on investigations related to former President Bill Clinton and his family
- Spoke at 2018 Federalist Society National Lawyers Convention; praised conservative legal



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organization as a “support group for those who care about our founding principles”

Bush 43 Alumni: *Top subordinates served with Azar in previous GOP administration’s HHS*

- Director of the Center for Medicare Demetrios Kouzoukas and Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan occupied Deputy General Counsel position between 2003 and 2008
- Hargan held Principal Associate Deputy Secretary role between 2005 and 2007, while Azar was Deputy Secretary

Pharma Industry: *Former exec with industry ties*

- Former board member of lobbying group Biotechnology Innovation Organization
- Collected \$46,500 in speaking fees for pharma events after leaving Eli Lilly
- Consulting firm Seraphim Strategies clients include the National Pharmaceutical Council

Indiana Policymakers: *Knew key figures in Indianapolis*

- Developed relationships with VP Mike Pence and CMS head Seema Verma
- Contributed to VP Mike Pence’s campaigns for governor

Political History

- General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services, 2001-2005
- Health and Human Services Secretary, 2017-present

Relevant Financial Information

Wealthy former executive has donated exclusively to Republicans over the last two decades; bulk of contributions have been to Indiana candidates

Political Donations

- Azar has donated nearly \$47,000 to Republican candidates since 1998
- Top recipients include Mitt Romney (2012 presidential campaign), IN Senator Todd Young, former IN Senator Daniel Coats, Mike Pence, and Jeb Bush (2016 presidential campaign)
- Approximately 60% of contributions have been to candidates running in Indiana

Personal

- Azar earned \$2 million in his last year as an Eli Lilly executive; collected \$1.6 million in severance and up \$1 million in profit from selling company stock

Publications, Media and Speaking

Visible Cabinet member writes op-eds and frequently appears on TV to defend Administration health policy; discusses health care in front of policy and industry audiences

Publications: *Publishes op-eds in daily newspapers to amplify administration health care messaging*

- Favorite Outlets: USA Today, McClatchy papers (e.g. Kansas City Star), NY Post, Washington Post, WSJ
- Favorite Subjects: Disease response, health care costs, opioids, drug prices, e-cigarettes

Media: *Frequent administration surrogate on national media discusses health policy and crisis response*

- Preferred Outlets: National broadcast and cable



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- Favorite Subjects: ACA, drug prices, Medicare, coronavirus response
- Social Media Habits: Twitter account announces HHS actions, which have recently revolved around the COVID-19 response

Speaking: *Discusses health care policy at think tanks, policy forums, industry associations*

- Favorite Subjects: Drug prices, health insurance, mental health, disease outbreaks
- Preferred Audience: Think tanks (e.g. American Enterprise Institute), policy forums (e.g. World Health Care Congress), industry associations (American Association of Nurse Practitioners)

Congressional Testimony: *Testifies on HHS budget*

- Testified before the House Appropriations Labor, HHS, and Education Subcommittee about the administration's 2021 FY budget request, February 2020
- Testified before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health about the administration's FY 2021 budget request, February 2020

Professional Affiliations

- Member of Board of Directors, American Council on Germany, 2010-2018
- Member of Board of Directors, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, 2008-2018
- Executive Committee Member, Healthcare Leadership Council, 2012-2017
- Treasurer, Healthcare Leadership Council, 2013-2017
- Member of Board of Trustee, Healthcare Leadership Council, 2008-2017
- Executive Committee Member, Yale Law School Association, 2010-2013

- Vice President, Yale Law School Association, 2011-2013
- Member of Board of Directors/Chairman of Human Resource Committee, Indianapolis Airport Authority, 2009-2012
- Member of Board of Directors, National Association of Manufacturers, 2008-2012

Awards

- Surgeon General's Medallion (Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service, 2007)

Family and Personal Background

Son of a doctor from a rural region of Maryland joined conservative network at Yale Law School

- Son of an ophthalmologist; senior Alex Azar has practiced medicine for thirty years and runs the Azar Eye Institute in Salisbury, MD
- Maryland Eastern Shore native says he still feels connected to rural region and returns regularly
- Lifelong conservative said he found friends through the Federalist Society at Yale Law School

Criticisms and Controversies

Azar faced criticism for insulin price increases at Lilly USA under his leadership; tension between him and CMS Administrator Seema Verma has drawn press scrutiny

Eli Lilly tenure

- While Azar was President of Eli Lilly's U.S. affiliate, the price of the company's most popular insulin drug doubled in 5 years



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- This practice contrasted with President Trump's stated desire to lower prescription drug costs and led most Democrats to oppose Azar's nomination

Verma tension

- In late 2019, press reports depicted a deteriorating relationship between Azar and Verma
- The Secretary and Administrator clashed over policy; Azar disapproved of Verma's plan to replace the ACA, and Verma helped turn Trump against Azar's plan to end drug rebates for pharmacy benefit managers
- Verma claimed that Azar presided over a sexist "boys club" at HHS; Azar reportedly regarded Verma as abrasive and willing to use accusations to achieve her goals
- VP Pence summoned them to a meeting in December 2019 in an attempt to resolve differences