

# Trump tapping Washington, Wall Street veterans for top jobs

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump is enlisting a trio of nominees with deep ties to Washington and Wall Street to fill out his Cabinet, including former Goldman Sachs executive Steven Mnuchin as secretary of the Treasury Department.

On Tuesday, Trump also chose Georgia Rep. Tom Price to oversee the nation's health care system, picking a fierce "Obamacare" critic who has championed efforts to privatize Medicare. And he selected another veteran Republican, Elaine Chao, a former labor secretary and the wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, to lead the Department of Transportation.

Mnuchin's official announcement was expected as early as Wednesday, according to a person familiar with the decision who insisted on anonymity in order to confirm the pick ahead of time.

Mnuchin, 53, led Trump's finance operations during the presidential campaign and become close with the president-elect and his family. But he has no government

experience, which could prove a hurdle in navigating the tricky politics of Washington.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mnuchin would play a central role in shaping Trump's tax policies and infrastructure plans. He would also lead an agency tasked with implementing international economic sanctions.

Mnuchin is expected to be joined on Trump's senior economic team by another financier, Wilbur Ross. The billionaire investor is considered the "king of bankruptcy" for buying beaten-down companies with the potential to deliver profits.

Trump spent much of Tuesday in his Manhattan skyscraper, racing through meetings with prospective administration hires as high-profile vacancies remain — none bigger than secretary of state.

He emerged in the evening for a private dinner with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who is on the shortlist for the nation's chief diplomat.

Price, picked to lead the Department of Health and Human

Services after more than a decade in Congress, helped craft House Speaker Paul Ryan's plan to privatize Medicare — a position Trump opposed in the campaign.

Price's selection raised questions about the incoming president's commitment to Medicare, among other popular entitlement programs he repeatedly vowed to preserve before the election. The Georgia congressman led GOP efforts on Capitol Hill to transform Medicare into a voucher-like system, a change that if enacted, would likely dramatically reduce government spending on the health care program that serves an estimated 57 million people.

Trump did not address Price's position on Medicare in a statement released by his transition team. The team did not respond to subsequent questions about it.

"Chairman Price, a renowned physician, has earned a reputation for being a tireless problem solver and the go-to expert on health care policy, making him the ideal choice to serve in this capacity," Trump

said. "He is exceptionally qualified to shepherd our commitment to repeal and replace Obamacare and bring affordable and accessible health care to every American."

Trump, in a 2015 interview promoted on his campaign website, pledged not to cut expensive entitlement programs that Republicans have fought for years to cut to help reduce the federal deficit.

"I'm not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican. And I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid. Every other Republican's going to cut," Trump told the *Daily Signal*.

He later changed his mind on Medicaid, embracing the GOP concept of turning the program over to the states with a fixed amount of federal "block grant" funding.

Like any Cabinet official, Price would carry out the wishes of the president. And a sweeping Medicare initiative would have to go through Congress with some Democratic support, which would be unlikely.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders

charged that Price "has a long history of wanting to do exactly the opposite of what Trump campaigned on."

Like Price, Elaine Chao is well-known in Washington. She was the first Asian-American woman to serve in Cabinet, as labor secretary under George W. Bush.

Her record in that post suggests she would bring a light hand to safety enforcement as transportation secretary. Under Chao at Labor, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration didn't issue a single significant new safety regulation for four years. Mine safety inspectors were cut and inspections reduced.

Both Price and Chao would require Senate confirmation. Major Cabinet vacancies remain.

The president-elect summoned Romney for dinner Tuesday night to discuss the secretary of state job for a second time. He also met with Tennessee Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, having met with former CIA director David Petraeus the day before.



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