



AP Photo/Susan Walsh
President Donald Trump waves in front of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner while visiting the Boeing South Carolina facility in North Charleston, S.C., on Friday.

Trump leaps back into campaign mode, raps media anew

NORTHCHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Hoping to shift attention from his troubled White House, President Donald Trump hit the road Friday to deliver a pep talk to American workers and the rest of the nation, resurrecting the jobs promises that powered his election victory and pledging in a campaign-style rally to “unleash the power of the American spirit.”

But he was only a few hours away from the turmoil he has stirred in Washington when he swerved from that positive message to escalate his complaints about news coverage of his young administration.

“The FAKENEWS media ... is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!” he exclaimed on Twitter, singling out The New York Times and TV networks. His latest outburst came a day after he forcefully defended his administration in a marathon White House news conference, brushing aside the tumult, infighting among senior staff and setbacks in courts and Congress.

He took a more upbeat tack in South Carolina.

“We love our workers and we are going to protect our workers,” Trump declared at a Boeing plant where the company showed off its new 787-10 Dreamliner aircraft. “We are going to fight for jobs. We are going to fight for our families,” he said in a reprise of the “America First” message from his campaign.

Trump is expected to stick to the theme Saturday when he holds a big rally in central Florida, a change of scenery that marks an effort to galvanize a month-old White House that has been buffeted by crisis and paralyzed by dysfunction.

The new president toured a 787-10 still under construction and, before leaving, sat in the pilot's seat of a completed airplane painted in contrasting shades of blue that formed the backdrop for his remarks. Some 5,000 employees and others inside a hangar greeted him with chants of “USA, USA.”

The president, who owns an airplane but now travels exclusively on government aircraft, praised the Boeing jetliner as “an amazing piece of art.” He noted that it's made of carbon fiber, seats 330 passengers, is 18 feet longer than the previous model and can fly for half a day before landing.

“The name says it all. Dreamliner, great name,” Trump said. “Our country is all about making dreams come true.”

“As your president I'm going to do everything I can to unleash the power of the American spirit and to put our great people back to work,” he said. “This is our mantra: Buy American and hire American.”

Trump then departed South Carolina for his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, where he plans to spend the holiday weekend. He arrived late Friday afternoon.

In Washington on Thursday, he complained bitterly about news coverage — and “criminal” leaks from within the government that took down his top national security adviser and revived questions about his own ties to Russia.

Trump is still trying to stabilize his national security team. On Monday, he demanded the resignation of national security adviser Michael Flynn following

revelations that Flynn had misled Vice President Mike Pence about Flynn's contacts with Russia. Trump's first choice to replace Flynn — retired Vice Admiral Robert Harward — turned down the offer.

FBI Director Jim Comey left a meeting with senators on the intelligence committee Friday afternoon. Neither Comey nor the senators would discuss the subject of the meeting, but it followed reports that the FBI had interviewed Flynn about his contacts in late December with Russian officials.

Trump tweeted Friday that retired Gen. Keith Kellogg, “who I have known for a long time, is very much in play for NSA — as are three others.” Kellogg, who is serving as the acting national security adviser, traveled to South Carolina with Trump aboard Air Force One.

Also along on the Florida trip were Trump's daughter Ivanka; her husband, Jared Kushner, a senior adviser to Trump; White House chief of staff Reince Priebus; and strategist Steve Bannon. Ivanka Trump waved and blew kisses to the crowd as she exited the completed 787-10 Dreamliner before her father did.

The White House said Trump might interview national security candidates at his estate.

In South Carolina, Trump said, “America is going to start winning again, winning like never before,” returning to a staple promise from last year's campaign speeches.

In his remarks, Trump also mentioned that he's been in talks with Boeing executives to reduce the cost to the government of building a future Air Force One presidential aircraft. He has denounced the costs as “out of control.”

Asked by reporters for an update after Friday's speech, Trump said: “Price is too high. But we're negotiating.”

Trump scheduled a campaign-style rally Saturday in Florida, his first as president.

The Florida rally comes as he makes his third weekend trip this month to what he calls his “Winter White House,” his Mar-a-Lago resort.

Pruitt OK'd as EPA chief over objections

By MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Over the strong objections of environmental groups, the Senate confirmed Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency on Friday, giving President Donald Trump an eager partner to fulfill his campaign pledge to increase the use of planet-warming fossil fuels.

Pruitt was sworn in later Friday by Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito.

In six years as Oklahoma's attorney general, Pruitt filed 14 lawsuits challenging EPA regulations that included limits on carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants. He also sued over the EPA's recent expansion of water bodies regulated under the Clean Water Act, a federal measure opposed by industries that would be forced to clean up polluted wastewater.

Pruitt submitted his resignation as attorney general to Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin on Friday.

Pruitt's supporters cheered his confirmation, hailing the 48-year-old Republican lawyer as the ideal pick to roll back environmental regulations they say are a drag on the nation's economy.

“EPA has made life hard for families all across America,” said Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. “The agency has issued punishing regulations that caused many hardworking Americans to lose their jobs. Mr. Pruitt will bring much needed change.”

The vote was 52-46 as Republican leaders used their party's narrow Senate majority to push Pruitt's confirmation despite calls from top Democrats to delay the vote until requested emails are released next week.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine was the lone Republican vote against Pruitt. Two Democrats from states with economies heavily dependent on fossil fuels crossed party lines to support Trump's pick, Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota.

During his Senate confirmation hearing last month, Pruitt said he disagreed with Trump's past statements that global warming is a hoax. However, Pruitt has previously expressed doubt about scientific evidence showing that the planet is heating up and that humans are to blame.

Pruitt's nomination was vigorously opposed by environmental groups and hundreds of current and former EPA employees, who fear he will preside over massive budget and staff cuts.

“The biologists, scientists, lab



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File
In this Jan. 18 file photo, Scott Pruitt testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

“Emails! Remember emails?”
— Chuck Schumer,
Senate Democratic Leader

technicians, engineers and other civil servants who work at the EPA must be able to do their jobs without political interference or fear of retribution,” said J. David Cox Sr., president of the American Federation of Government Employees, a labor union representing more than 9,000 EPA employees.

Democrats boycotted a committee vote on Pruitt's nomination last month, citing his refusal to hand over thousands of emails that he exchanged with oil and gas executives. As part of a public records lawsuit, a state judge in Oklahoma on Thursday concluded there was no legal justification for Pruitt's withholding his correspondence for the past two years. She ordered him to release most of the emails by next week.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer called for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to delay Pruitt's confirmation vote for 10 days. Schumer, of New York, tried to draw a direct line between Pruitt's withheld emails and last year's demands from Republicans during the presidential campaign.

“Emails! Remember emails?” Schumer asked on the Senate floor. “We should get them out!” they said about Hillary Clinton. “... If they weren't worried about them, then why rush?”

To dramatize their cause, Demo-

crats kept the Senate in session Thursday night into Friday morning with speeches opposing Pruitt's confirmation. Democrats were still marching to the floor at daybreak.

In the end, McConnell had the votes. So far, the Senate has confirmed 14 out of 22 Trump Cabinet or Cabinet-level picks requiring confirmation.

Another nominee, billionaire businessman Wilbur Ross, cleared a Senate hurdle on Friday and is on track to win approval to serve as commerce secretary. A final vote is slated for Feb. 27.

Trump has tapped some of the wealthiest Americans to serve in his Cabinet, and ethics reviews have slowed the confirmation process. So have Senate Democrats, who have opposed nominees and forced hours of debate.

Pruitt is closely aligned in his home state with oil and gas companies, whose executives have backed his political campaigns. Though Pruitt ran unopposed for a second term in 2014, public campaign finance reports show he raised more than \$700,000, much of it from people in the energy and utility industries.

Environmental groups have already begun hiring additional lawyers to stymie as much of Pruitt's agenda as possible in court.

“Scott Pruitt is the worst pick ever confirmed to lead the EPA,” said Rhea Suh, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “We'll use every tool in the kit to stop him from harming our air and water, endangering our communities and surrendering our kids to climate catastrophe.”

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