

## Senate confirms nominations for energy and environment agency positions

January 2, 2019

On January 2, 2019, the final full day of the 115th Congress, senators met to confirm a lengthy list of President Donald Trump's nominees by voice vote.

Now halfway through his term, President Trump is still looking to fill many key agency positions in his administration.

According to the Washington Post's Trump administration appointee [tracker](#), while 78 percent of Department of Energy (DOE) positions requiring Senate confirmation have been filled, key positions at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Interior Department are at 57 percent and 41 percent filled, respectively, as of January 28.

Some of the prominent geoscience-related agency nominees that were confirmed on January 2 include [Kelvin Droegemeier](#) as director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, [Daniel Simmons](#) as DOE assistant secretary for energy efficiency and renewable energy, and [Teri Donaldson](#) for DOE inspector general.

Additionally, [Mary Neumayr](#) was approved to head the Council on Environmental Quality and [Alexandra Dunn](#) was chosen to lead EPA's chemicals office.

Many other nominations failed to advance during the 115th Congress, including Lane Genatowski for director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, Christopher Fall for director of DOE's Office of Science, David Vela for director of the National Park Service, and Barry Myers for administrator of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, meaning that the president may decide to resubmit these nominations in the current session of Congress or select new candidates to fill the remaining positions in his administration.

Also on January 2, [Kevin McIntyre](#), formerly the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), passed away after a long struggle with brain cancer. Commissioner Neil Chatterjee is serving as acting chairman for FERC until President Trump selects a new nominee.

Moving forward, the administration is awaiting Senate confirmation of Andrew Wheeler's nomination to become administrator of EPA—a position that has been open since July 2018 following the [resignation](#) of former EPA chief Scott Pruitt. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will [vote](#) on Wheeler's nomination on February 5, after having convened a [hearing](#) on the nominee earlier this month. Additionally, the administration will seek to replace former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who [resigned](#) from the position in late 2018. President Trump [announced](#) on February 4 that he will be nominating David Bernhardt, the current acting secretary of the Interior Department, to permanently take over the position.

*Sources: American Association for the Advancement of Science; E&E News; The Hill; Roll Call; U.S. Senate, Committee on Environment and Public Works; The Washington Post.*

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