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U.S.

## For President-Elect Trump, Loyalty Comes Second

Many of Donald Trump's picks to fill his administration suggest situational pragmatism is a guiding force on his path to the White House



*Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani said he has been offered 'several cabinet positions,' but declined to say which ones. PHOTO: JAY LAPRETE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES*

By **MICHAEL C. BENDER**

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Donald Trump is passing over loyalists, defending the people he once pilloried and rethinking central campaign promises as he assembles his administration.

Halfway through a 10-week transition from the election to the inauguration, Mr. Trump is forging a transactional path to the presidency. For the businessman-turned-politician, pragmatism appears to be taking precedence over loyalty to the top aides and advisers who helped get him to the White House.

“There’s no doubt that Mr. Trump wants to get the job done, and he’s willing to evaluate situations as they occur and work through them on their own merits,” said Ed Brookover, a former Trump political adviser.

The administration assembled so far by Mr. Trump has been defined as much by those who aren’t being offered top jobs as by the men and women chosen to surround him at the White House.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee were among the few high-profile Republicans who stood by Mr. Trump during his darkest campaign hours, including the day of the release of a videotape in which he bragged about groping women. Yet none of them, so far, are slated to join his administration, prompting grumbling among hard-core Trump backers.

“[Mr. Huckabee] did everything he could to help him and if they wanted him to be secretary of something he would certainly consider it and see if it would be good for Trump and him,” said Chip Saltsman, the former Arkansas governor’s longtime top

political aide. Mr. Huckabee has met with transition officials, and was discussed as a possible Israeli ambassador, a job now set to go to one of Mr. Trump’s attorneys.

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Mr. Gingrich  
has said he  
would  
prefer to  
work  
outside the  
administrati

on and that he has the job he wants, describing his role as a general planner “across the entire system.” Mr. Trump’s actions show his willingness to tell loyalists “I love you personally, but I don’t think you can do the job,” Mr. Gingrich said in an interview, adding that the president-elect has “placed the importance of his team above the campaign stuff.”

Mr. Christie and Mr. Giuliani, who once was considered the front-runner for secretary of state, haven’t received the sort of offers they would have preferred, they and their allies have said.

Mr. Giuliani said in an interview that he had been offered “several cabinet positions,” but declined to say which ones.

The president-elect recently selected Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson, whose business skills he has touted, for the top job at the State Department. Mr. Trump tapped bankruptcy attorney David Friedman, who has urged a tougher stance in negotiating with Palestinians in the Middle East, as Israeli ambassador.

The situational pragmatism of Mr. Trump also has been in evidence at recent campaign-style rallies, where he has reversed course on some tactics and rhetoric that no longer suit his needs.

He now regularly stops the crowd from booing former Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, whom he now says he won’t try to send her to jail for her use of a private email server as secretary of state.

“No, it’s OK. No, forget it,” Mr. Trump said on a snowy night this month in Grand Rapids, Michigan as the crowd chanted “lock her up.” “That plays great before the election. Now, we don’t care.”

He also has tried to quiet heckling of President Barack Obama.

“There is a sobering process when you walk into the Oval Office,” Mr. Obama said on Friday when asked about conversations with his successor. “I haven’t shared previously private conversations I’ve had with the president-elect. I will say that they have been cordial and in some cases have involved me making some pretty specific suggestions.”

Mr. Trump has also extended olive branches to Republicans who were political targets from the campaign trail, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The president-elect battled with Mr. McConnell over the direction of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Mr. McConnell said it was a “rookie mistake” for Mr. Trump to say he might not honor NATO’s mutual-defense provisions. Mr. Trump said the Kentucky Republican was “100% wrong.”

On Nov. 29, Mr. Trump appointed Mr. McConnell’s wife, former Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, to head the Transportation Department, and one of Mr. Ryan’s closest friends in the House, Rep. Tom Price (R., Ga.), as the next Health and Human Services secretary.

“The thing people don’t understand about Donald Trump is that he’s a transactional guy, and he has been his whole life,” Kellyanne Conway said in a recent interview. “This is how he built his career. He’s always learned what he’s needed to learn for that meeting, for that building, for that vendor, for that banker. And that’s suited him well.”



Exxon Mobil Chairman and CEO Rex Tillerson PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Mr. Trump may have had difficulty getting some of his supporters confirmed, including Mr. Giuliani who was facing vocal opposition from Sen. Rand Paul (R., Ky.).

And his White

House won't be without a number of loyalists.

Stephen Bannon, who helped focus Mr. Trump's winning message to working class voters, will remain his top strategist, and Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, a top campaign adviser during the race, while be White House chief of staff.

Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, the first U.S. Senator to endorse the political newcomer, has been selected as Attorney General and campaign finance chairman Steven Mnuchin will be nominated as the next Treasury secretary.

The loyalty question is particularly acute in New Hampshire, the site of his first victory and home to Corey Lewandowski, his initial campaign manager.

Mr. Lewandowski, who remains a fixture at Trump Tower, has told associates that he may not join the administration in Washington.

There is a fleet of Republican activists and operatives who were early Trump supporters and are loyal to Mr. Lewandowski. Fred Doucette, a Republican state representative from Salem, N.H., was co-chairman of Mr. Trump's New Hampshire campaign. Mr. Doucette said he still speaks to Mr. Lewandowski daily but said the issue of what White House post, if any, Mr. Lewandowski will receive is a tricky one.

"I kinda don't want to touch that," he said. "Things are happening and I think Mr. Trump will take care of his loyal people."

As for himself, Mr. Doucette said he remains patient.

"I'm sure when the time is appropriate I'll be approached," said Mr. Doucette, a retired firefighter and paramedic who was first elected to the New Hampshire state legislature in 2014. "I was told a couple certain things and I know when the time is appropriate I'll get the phone call."

Former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele said early Trump loyalists such as Messers. Lewandowski, Giuliani, Christie and others may wind up filling important positions later in the Trump administration.

"Just because you didn't get secretary of fill-in-the-blank now doesn't mean you're not going to get a role later," Mr. Steele said. "If six months from now, when the bulk of the administration has filled itself out, if they're not in a place then yeah, we can have the conversation about loyalty."

—Reid J. Epstein contributed to this article.

**Write to** Michael C. Bender at [Mike.Bender@wsj.com](mailto:Mike.Bender@wsj.com)