

## **Trump meets with cabinet hopefuls, outlines plans for first day in office**

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**Melissa Fares & Emily Stephenson, Reuters**

US president-elect Donald Trump met with cabinet hopefuls at his Manhattan office tower yesterday and later outlined plans for his first day in office, including withdrawing from a major trade accord and investigating abuses of work visa programmes.

Trump met with Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin, Democratic US Representative Tulsi Gabbard and former Texas governor Rick Perry. But he announced no further appointments, keeping candidates and the public guessing about the shape of the administration that will take office on Jan. 20.

Fallin, Gabbard and Perry were the latest of dozens of officials who have made their way across the opulent lobby of Trump Tower for talks with the Republican president-elect in a relatively open - and unconventional - transition process since his election victory on Nov 8.

Trump, who has not held a news conference since his election, issued a video yesterday evening outlining some of his plans for his first day in office, including formally declaring his intent to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, or TPPA, trade deal, which he called "a potential disaster for our country."

The 12-nation TPPA is Democratic President Barack Obama's signature trade initiative and was signed by the United States earlier this year but has not been ratified by the US Senate.

The president-elect said he would replace the accord with bilaterally negotiated trade deals that would "bring jobs and industry back onto American shores."

"My agenda will be based on a simple core principle: putting America first. Whether it's producing steel, building cars or curing disease, I want the next generation of production and innovation to happen right here on our great homeland, America, creating wealth and jobs for American workers," he said.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday the TPPA "would be meaningless without the United States."

Trump said he would cancel some restrictions on producing energy in the United States on his first day in office, particularly shale oil and "clean coal," which he said would create "many millions of high-paying jobs."

He promised to direct the Labor Department to investigate abuses of visa programmes for immigrant workers. The main US visa programme for technology workers could face tough scrutiny under Trump and his proposed attorney general, US Senator Jeff Sessions, a longtime critic of the programme.

Trump had made eliminating regulations and withdrawing from the TPPA central to his campaign, but he sent mixed signals during the campaign about his views on visa programs including the main H-1B visa for high-tech industry workers.

### **'We're got to get it right'**

Trump has so far picked two cabinet members and three top White House advisers, but aides said he was not expected to make further announcements yesterday.

"They could come this week, they could come today, but we're not in a rush to publish names," Kellyanne Conway, a senior adviser, told reporters. "We've got to get it right."

Trump spoke often with reporters camped out at his New Jersey golf course over the weekend, but has not held a traditional news conference to talk about his priorities. He held an off-the-record meeting with a group of television anchors and executives yesterday afternoon and was scheduled to meet with print media representatives today.

Trump's first meeting yesterday was with Iraq war veteran Gabbard, a representative from Hawaii who backed US Senator Bernie Sanders in his unsuccessful 2016 Democratic presidential nominating contest against Hillary Clinton.

The "frank and positive" discussion focused on the war in Syria, counterterrorism and other foreign policy issues, Gabbard said in a statement. She did not say whether a Cabinet role was part of the discussion.

Gabbard has veered from Democratic Party positions at times, backing policies cracking down on immigration to the United States by Muslims.

Fallin told reporters she was not offered a position but discussed "a wide range of topics" with Trump. The Republican governor's spokesperson said that included a focus on the Interior Department, an agency whose responsibilities include oversight of oil and gas leases on public lands.

Former Republican US Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts told reporters he had a "great" meeting about veterans' issues with Trump.

"He's obviously going to take my application or interest under consideration, and I'm glad that he called and he's going to obviously meet other folks," Brown said, adding the outcome would likely be known after Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday.

Trump also met with former House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich and Elaine Chao, the US labor secretary under former President George W Bush, advisers said.

Perry was being considered for cabinet posts including defense, energy and veterans affairs, Trump's transition team said.

Trump, a New York businessman who has never previously held public office and who was the surprise winner over Clinton this month, has so far named senior leaders of his national

security and law enforcement teams.

In addition to Sessions, they are US Representative Mike Pompeo of Kansas as CIA director, and retired Army Lieutenant General Michael Flynn as White House national security adviser.

Over the weekend, Trump based himself at his golf resort in Bedminster, New Jersey, where he conferred with retired Marine Corps General James Mattis, a contender for defense secretary; Jonathan Gray, a board member of the Blackstone Group, in the running for treasury secretary; and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, a fierce Trump critic who now is under consideration for secretary of state.

For Thanksgiving, Trump planned to travel today to Mar-a-Lago, a golf resort he owns in Florida, a spokesperson said.

Vice-president-elect Mike Pence will travel later this week to spend the holiday in Mississippi, where his son Michael, who is in the Marines, is stationed.

- Reuters

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