News




Newly sworn-in Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, center left, and his wife, Rachel Campos-Duffy, center right, pose for a photo with their children and Vice President JD Vance, center, at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, Jan. 28, 2025. (Wikimedia Commons/U.S. Department of Transportation)



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Before entering his confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill, Sean Duffy gathered in the hallway with his family — which includes nine children — and led them in praying a Hail Mary. He was later confirmed as secretary of transportation.

Duffy is not the only Catholic among President Donald Trump's proposed advisers. If all of his nominees are confirmed, Trump's Cabinet would be comparable to what has been called the most Catholic Cabinet in history — his predecessor Joe Biden's.

More than a third of Trump's nominees are Catholic. Three — Duffy, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe — have already been confirmed by the U.S. Senate. One, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is among the most controversial choices.

Most grew up in Catholic families, although two are converts. Several have rarely if ever talked about their faith publicly. Others credit it as the reason for their conservative political views, especially on topics such as abortion or religious liberty.

But some Catholic leaders would like to see cabinet members more fully embrace Catholic social teaching.

"Catholic politicians like Vance — and other Catholics in the Cabinet, Congress or Supreme Court — are hypocritical when they claim to be 'pro-life' while celebrating the mass deportation of migrants and refugees, urging expansive use of the death penalty, and demeaning LGBTQ persons as unworthy of protection," Trinity Washington University President Patricia McGuire said.

In an email to the National Catholic Reporter, McGuire blamed priests and bishops who focus on abortion to the exclusion of other life issues for "encouraging politicization of our faith among Catholic politicians who misuse and distort Catholic teachings for their own political gain."

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Stephen Schneck, a political philosopher who chaired the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom during the Biden administration, is concerned about policies — even within the first days of the Trump administration — that have been "devastating" to the church's work of showing mercy to the poor and vulnerable.

"My sincere hope is that the Catholics in the Trump Administration will speak up now to dial back on these policies and other policies that are so contrary to our faith," Schneck said in an email interview. "I pray their Catholic faith guides them to mercy."

Trump has also tapped Catholics for other top positions, including White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, Catholic Vote co-founder Brian Burch for ambassador to the Holy See, and Callista Gingrich (wife of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich) as ambassador to Switzerland.

Brief bios of members of the administration and proposed Cabinet members who are Catholic follow.

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# JD Vance

**Vice president**

**Assumed office Jan. 20, 2025**

**Prior positions:** U.S. senator, investment banker, corporate lawyer, bestselling author

**Education:** Ohio State University, Yale Law School

**Personal:** Vance, 40, grew up poor in Appalachia, according to his memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*. Because his mother struggled with drug addiction, he was raised primarily by his grandparents. Vance and his wife, attorney Usha Chilukuri Vance, have three children.

**Related:** JD Vance vs. the Vatican: Inside Pope Francis' fight for Catholic identity

**Faith background:** Raised as a conservative evangelical, Vance converted to Catholicism in 2019, in part because of the influence of billionaire Peter Thiel. Vance

has said that he "became persuaded over time that Catholicism was true" and was inspired by Catholicism's intellectual tradition, specifically by St. Augustine's *Confessions*. He also has said his political views "are pretty aligned with Catholic social teaching." His wife, whom he met at Yale Law School, is Hindu.

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## Marco Rubio

**Secretary of state**

**Assumed office Jan. 21, 2025**

**Prior positions:** U.S. senator, Florida state representative

**Education:** University of Florida, University of Miami Law School



Newly sworn-in Secretary of State Marco Rubio, accompanied by his wife, Jeanette Dousdebes Rubio, is greeted by employees as he arrives at the Department of State in Washington, Jan. 21, 2025. (Wikimedia Commons/U.S. Department of State/Freddie Everett)

**Personal:** Rubio, 53, was born in Florida to Cuban immigrant parents who were not yet citizens at the time of his birth. His maternal grandfather was once scheduled for deportation for being undocumented, but he was later given resident status. He and his wife, Jeanette Dousdebes, a former Miami Dolphins cheerleader, have four children.

**Faith background:** Rubio grew up Catholic and was baptized, confirmed and married in the church. When he was 8 and his family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, they attended a Mormon church, though they eventually returned to Catholicism, "mostly at my instigation," Rubio has written. Later as an adult, Rubio attended a Southern Baptist church. In a 2016 profile, Rubio is described as "fully aligned with the Catholic Church," but someone who "expresses himself in evangelical terms."

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# John Ratcliffe

**Director of the Central Intelligence Agency**

**Assumed office Jan. 23, 2025**

**Prior positions:** Director of national intelligence, U.S. representative, mayor of Heath, Texas, U.S. attorney. He also represented Trump in his first impeachment proceedings.

**Education:** University of Notre Dame, Southern Methodist University Law School

**Personal:** Ratcliffe, 59, grew up in suburban Chicago, the youngest of six children. His parents were both teachers. He met his wife, Michele, at law school. They have two daughters. Michele is partner at a firm in Rockwell, Texas.



Vice President JD Vance swears in John Ratcliffe as director of the CIA at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, Jan. 23, 2025. Holding the Bible is Ratcliffe's wife, Michele. (Wikimedia Commons/Office of Vice President of the United States)

**Faith background:** Ratcliffe rarely talks publicly about his Catholicism. As one of the most conservative members of Congress, he said he was "grateful for the opportunity I have in Congress to defend Americans' fundamental right to follow their religious convictions." Ratcliffe was a contributor to the Heritage Foundation's "Project 2025" and a co-chair of the America First Policy Institute.

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## Sean Duffy

**Secretary of transportation**

**Assumed office Jan. 28, 2025**

**Prior position:** U.S. representative, co-host of "The Bottom Line" on Fox Business

**Education:** St. Mary's University of Minnesota, William Mitchell College of Law

**Personal:** Duffy, 53, grew up in rural Wisconsin, the 10th of 11 children. He was a cast member on the MTV series "The Real World: Boston" and "Road Rules: All Stars," where he met his future wife, Rachel Campos-Duffy, who is now a Fox News personality. The couple have nine children. Duffy resigned from Congress to help care for his daughter, who was born with a heart condition and Down syndrome.

**Faith background:** Faith is an important part of the Duffys' family life, according to Campos-Duffy, who said they go to Mass and pray together. Duffy was sworn in as transportation secretary on a study Bible by Catholic apologist Scott Hahn of Franciscan University at Steubenville, Ohio.

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Lori Chavez-DeRemer (OSV News/Ben Lee/handout via Reuters)

# Lori Chavez-DeRemer

**Cabinet position:** Secretary of labor

**Nomination pending full Senate vote**

**Prior positions:** U.S. representative, mayor of Happy Valley, Oregon

**Education:** California University State University, Fresno

**Personal:** Chavez-DeRemer, 56, grew up in rural San Joaquin Valley in California. Her great-grandmother was a Mexican immigrant. She and her husband, Shawn DeRemer, an anesthesiologist, founded an anesthesia management company and opened several medical clinics. They have two adult twin daughters.

**Faith background:** Chavez-DeRemer rarely speaks publicly about her Catholicism. The lobbying group Catholic Vote called her a "sellout" and retracted its endorsement when she opposed a bill limiting taxpayer funding for abortion because her state had rejected a similar statewide initiative. She lost her bid for re-election.

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Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (OSV News/Reuters/Evelyn Hockstein)

## Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

**Cabinet position:** Secretary of health and human services

**Nomination pending full Senate vote**

**Prior positions:** Environmental lawyer, founder of an anti-vaccine advocacy organization

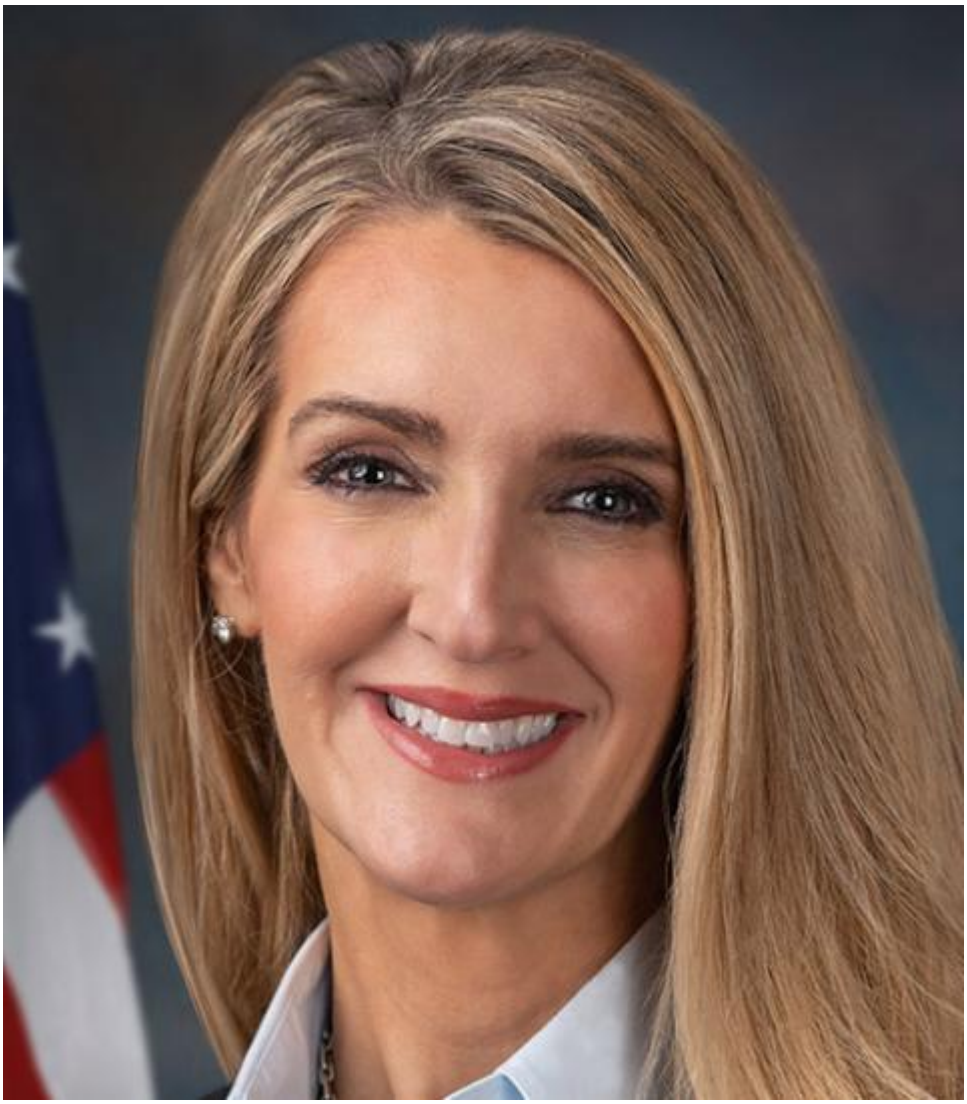
**Education:** Harvard University, University of Virginia Law School, Pace University

**Personal:** Kennedy, 71, is one of 11 children of the late U.S. attorney general and senator, Robert F. Kennedy. He was 14 when his father was assassinated. Kennedy

is divorced from his first two wives, with whom he had a total of six children. He is married to actress Cheryl Hines. He has a voice disorder that makes speech difficult.

**Faith background:** In an interview with EWTN, Kennedy said that his faith helped him overcome his drug addictions. His Catholic faith, specifically St. Francis of Assisi, is also said to have inspired his environmental activism. He wrote a children's book about St. Francis.

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Kelly Loeffler (Wikimedia Commons/Office of Sen. Kelly Loeffler)

## Kelly Loeffler

**Cabinet position:** Small Business Administration administrator

**Nomination pending full Senate vote**

**Prior positions:** U.S. senator, bitcoin trading company CEO, former co-owner WNBA team Atlanta Dream

**Education:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, DePaul University Kellstadt Graduate School of Business

**Personal:** Loeffler, 54, grew up in downstate Illinois on a family corn and soybean farm. She is married to Jeffrey Sprecher, founder and CEO of Intercontinental Exchange and chair of the New York Stock Exchange. In 2020, they had a combined net worth of $800 million, making her the wealthiest senator at the time.

**Faith background:** Loeffler has said that in her family, "Life revolved around farming, church, school and 4-H" and has spoken about how her faith informs her opposition to abortion. She is a member of Atlanta's Cathedral of Christ the King Parish.

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Linda McMahon (Wikimedia Commons/Gage Skidmore)

# Linda McMahon

**Cabinet position:** Secretary of education

**Nomination pending Senate committee vote**

**Prior positions:** Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, World Wrestling Entertainment executive

**Education:** East Carolina University

**Personal:** McMahon, 76, grew up in North Carolina and married her high school sweetheart, Vince McMahon. They have two children and six grandchildren.

**Faith background:** McMahon converted to Catholicism after a Baptist upbringing. She has served on the board of trustees of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut, where the student commons building was named for her after a $5 million donation. She is a co-chair of the America First Policy Institute, a think tank formed to create a blueprint for the second Trump administration. The institute promotes ideas such as expanding executive power, banning pornography, prohibiting the mailing of abortion pills, ending the Justice Department's status as an independent agency, and eliminating civil service protections for federal workers.

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Elise Stefanik (Wikimedia Commons/Senate Foreign Relations Committee)

## Elise Stefanik

**Cabinet position:** U.S. ambassador to the United Nations

**Nomination pending full Senate vote**

**Prior position:** U.S. representative

**Education:** Harvard University

**Personal:** Stefanik, 40, grew up in Albany, New York, where her parents owned and ran a wholesale plywood distribution business. She and her husband, Matthew Manda, have one child. Manda works for a trade association of firearms manufacturers.

**Faith background:** Stefanik rarely talks publicly about her Catholicism. She was not married in the church.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.