



SENATE HEARING ANALYSES OVERVIEW

FINDINGS

The Center for Presidential Transition examined the transcripts from the Senate confirmation hearings of 23 Cabinet-level and agency head positions. We isolated and categorized questions from the confirmation hearings of the two most recent officials confirmed for each selected position.

While Senators' questions tend to focus on a nominee's background and significant agency-related issue areas, extracting commitments from nominees to engage honestly and consistently with Congress is a common theme. Regardless of committee, agency or party affiliation, Senators ask nominees to pledge compliance in providing documents, witnesses and in-person testimony when requested. In interviews conducted by the Center, Senate staff members elaborated on this trend, indicating that committees seek to stress the importance of an ongoing, reciprocal relationship with appointees.

Moreover, as highlighted by the Center's interviews and Senate transcripts, telling truth to power has been a central theme in recent confirmation hearings. Both Republican and Democratic Senators tested whether nominees would act against the President's directive or inform committees of Presidential misconduct. Interviewees likewise explained that Senators may be inclined to assess a nominee's commitment to independence, particularly if the individual is perceived as being overly partisan.

SELECTED POSITIONS, SIGNIFICANT THEMES AND QUESTION TOTALS FOR THE TWO MOST RECENT CONFIRMED OFFICIALS INCLUDE:

- **Secretary of State**, 454 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (16%), Russia (12%), Russian Interference and the Mueller Investigation (8%)
- **Secretary of Treasury**, 304 questions
 - Work History and Personal Investments (25%), Trump's Business Management Approach (8%), Tax Reform (8%)
- **Secretary of Defense**, 213 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (12%), Strategy and Priorities for the Agency (10%), Iran (9%)
- **Attorney General**, 552 questions
 - Russian Interference and the Mueller Investigation (26%), Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (13%), Immigration (9%)
- **Secretary of Interior**, 132 questions
 - Native American Policy and Relations (14%), Environmental Protections (14%), Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (11%)
- **Secretary of Agriculture**, 83 questions
 - Budget (13%), State Issues and Visits (11%), Trade (10%)
- **Secretary of Commerce**, 144 questions
 - Trade Laws and Regulations (19%), Personal Ethics and President Trump's Ethics (10%), Cybersecurity (8%)
- **Secretary of Labor**, 119 questions

- Workplace Safety (11%), Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (11%), Pensions and Retirees (10%)
- **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, 261 questions
 - Medicare and Medicaid (21%), Repealing the Affordable Care Act (14%), Access to Healthcare (9%), Drug Prices (9%)
- **Secretary of Housing and Urban Development**, 95 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (12%), Affordable and Subsidized Housing (11%), the Federal Housing Administration (8%)
- **Secretary of Transportation**, 124 questions
 - Aviation (19%), State Issues and Visits (18%), Infrastructure (11%)
- **Secretary of Energy**, 117 questions
 - Carbon Capture and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (12%), State Issues and Visits (9%), Climate Change (8%)
- **Secretary of Education**, 160 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (13%), Accountability in K-12 Education (11%), Students with Disabilities (8%)
- **Secretary of Veterans Affairs**, 146 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (16%), Vacancies and Hiring Freeze (8%), Medical Care Delays and Backlogs (7%)
- **Secretary of Homeland Security**, 162 questions
 - DACA (22%), Immigration Laws and Enforcement (17%), General Homeland Security and Required Questions (8%)
- **EPA Administrator**, 345 questions
 - Climate Change (11%), Potential Conflicts of Interest (9%), Ties to Big Industry (6%)
- **Director of the Office of Management and Budget**, 229 questions
 - Entitlement Programs (19%), Budget (13%), Federal Workers (9%)
- **Small Business Administration Administrator**, 87 questions
 - Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (14%), Minority-Owned Small Businesses (11%), Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer Programs (10%)
- **Director of National Intelligence**, 155 questions
 - Relationship with President (26%), Personal Background, Leadership and Ethics (13%), General Intelligence Community (12%)
- **CIA Director**, 150 questions
 - Gina Haspel's involvement in the destruction of enhanced interrogation tapes (21%), Enhanced Interrogation (21%), General CIA (10%)
- **Director of the Office of Personnel Management**, 62 questions
 - Hiring Process (24%), Cooperation with Congress (15%), Federal Employee Experience (15%)
- **Chair of Council of Economic Advisers**, 31 questions
 - Economic Growth (32%), Financial Crisis (19%)
- **Chair of Council on Environmental Quality**, 39 questions
 - NEPA and Renewable Fuels Standard (28%), General CEQ (23%), Climate Change (13%)