



## PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

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### **The first 100 days: a story of successful preparation, historic challenges and progress despite a broken appointments system**

*Biden's first hundred days were marked by a slow start for Senate confirmations, renewed support for federal workers and clear signs that the presidential appointments system is in need of reform.*

**WASHINGTON** – Despite several unavoidable challenges and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, President Joe Biden is on track to finish his first 100 days in office with at least 35 out of about 1,200 Senate confirmed political appointees on the job. There are currently 88 of Biden's nominees awaiting action by the Senate, which has moved slowly to confirm personnel for some important administration jobs.

The nonpartisan, nonprofit [Partnership for Public Service](https://partnershipforpublicservice.org) monitors and assesses the health of the federal government by providing resources like its [political appointments tracker](https://partnershipforpublicservice.org/political-appointments-tracker) with The Washington Post. The tracker, which follows the progress of nearly 800 Senate-confirmed positions in the Biden administration, has shown that while the Senate was slow to confirm appointees in the administration's first weeks, the pace gradually improved to match or improve upon previous presidencies.

“The Biden administration has had a strong start by a number of metrics,” **Partnership for Public Service President and CEO Max Stier said.** “One of the most crucial objectives of a new administration is to appoint and swiftly confirm top leadership positions at federal agencies.

**Stier continued,** “President Biden and his team should be commended for the extensive steps they took during the campaign and the presidential transition to prepare to govern. Successes like the nationwide vaccination program would not have been possible without good leaders in place, coordination among federal agencies and collaboration with the private sector as well as state, local and tribal governments.”

While the Biden administration has succeeded in nominating qualified people for important jobs, many are still navigating the slow, broken and ineffective confirmation landscape.

“There are simply too many political appointed positions, and especially too many that require Senate confirmation. As the challenges of the current moment show, a new administration is managing multiple, urgent crises without many key leaders in place.”

Some obstacles that slowed the pace of Senate confirmations in the early days of the new administration were unavoidable. The late election runoffs in Georgia that determined control of the Senate, an unsettled

power-sharing agreement in the Senate, an impeachment trial and the fallout of the January 6th Capitol insurrection all delayed the pace of confirmations.

Each of the 15 statutorily-established positions of President Biden's Cabinet were confirmed by March 22, at which point the president could declare that he had formed the [most diverse Cabinet in U.S. history](#). While agency heads are key for providing political accountability and leadership, many positions responsible for management and strategy execution remain vacant.

There are a number of unfilled jobs responsible for dealing with the pandemic, the economy and national security that are either awaiting action in the Senate, or for which no nominee has been named. For instance, no nominee has been submitted to lead the Food and Drug Administration, while a candidate to be the assistant secretary for tax policy at the Department of Treasury is awaiting Senate action. Other key health-related positions with no nominees include the assistant secretary for health affairs at the Department of Defense and the undersecretary for health at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

While the president has achieved [mixed success](#) with Senate-confirmed appointments, he [set a record](#) on his first day in office by filling about 1,100 out of approximately 2,800 executive branch and White House positions not requiring Senate confirmation, far more than either Presidents Obama or Trump, and a testament to the personnel work done during the transition.

In his first 100 days, the president also made it a priority to focus on revitalizing the federal workforce. During his first week in office, Biden [issued a video](#) expressing support and appreciation to career public servants, emphasizing their professionalism and patriotism. Biden also took swift action to repeal an executive order that weakened the civil service system and one that inhibited work to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in the federal government.

“Our nation’s civil servants are the backbone of our democracy” **Stier said**. “President Biden and his leadership team have started right with the federal workforce, and the Partnership looks forward to celebrating these unsung heroes alongside the administration during [Public Service Recognition Week](#), which starts, Sunday, May 2.”

While the Biden administration has made good progress in his first 100 days, there is still more work to be done to rebuild our most important democratic institution – the federal government.

“After suffering decades of rust and neglect, our federal government is in desperate need of investment and revitalization,” **Stier said**. “The forthcoming President's Management Agenda is an opportunity for the Biden administration to take bold action to strengthen our government so that it can meet America’s current and future needs.”

In the [Roadmap for Renewing Our Federal Government](#), the Partnership has outlined four priorities for revitalizing the federal government. These key issues include improving government leadership, attracting a new generation into public service, supporting innovation and modernizing technology, and enabling effective collaboration across government and with the private sector.

“The priorities laid out in the Roadmap for Renewing Our Federal Government are the pathway toward a stronger, better federal government and should be key components of the new management agenda,” **Stier said**.

The Partnership also produces research and recommendations to assess and improve the health of the federal government, including [Oversight Snapshots](#) and [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#)<sup>®</sup> scores.

The 2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings, the most comprehensive assessment of how federal public servants view their jobs and workplaces will be released in June by the Partnership and [Boston Consulting Group](#). Federal employee morale lags the private sector by a big margin, despite our government having the big advantage of a compelling mission to serve the public. Government leaders should embrace the goal of meeting or exceeding the private sector benchmarks when it comes to having the most engaged workforce.

To follow the president’s progress making appointments through Day 100, the Partnership will update [this webpage](#) every business day with the number of nominations submitted and confirmed until Thursday, April 29.

**Comparative Appointments Data as of April 21, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. EDT**

**Submitted and Confirmed Nominees from Presidents George W. Bush through Biden at Key Milestones during First 100 Days**

		Day 1 Jan. 20	Day 10 Jan. 29	Day 91 April 20	Day 100 April 29
W. Bush	Submitted	13	17	66	85
	Confirmed	7	13	31	34
Obama	Submitted	34	36	164	190
	Confirmed	7	21	55	67
Trump	Submitted	26	26	53	72
	Confirmed	2	4	25	28
Biden	Submitted	36	36	124	
	Confirmed	1	4	34	
<b>Notes:</b>					
Submitted	The submitted category captures the number of nominations formally submitted to the Senate. Due to the confirmation process, nominations are often announced days or weeks before they are officially submitted to the Senate.				
Confirmed	The number of confirmed nominations captures non-concurrent positions. For example, we count nominations to be the ambassador to the General Assembly of the UN and a separate nomination to be the representative of the United States in the UN Security Council as a single nomination.				
Dates	The days refer to the number of days after the first inauguration for W. Bush, Obama, Trump and Biden (2001, 2009, 2017 and 2021, respectively).				
Source:	<i>Data compiled by the Center for Presidential Transition from Congress.gov and the Washington Post and Partnership for Public Service Biden Political Appointee Tracker. Only includes full-time civilian nominations.</i>				

During the past 19 years, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service has been dedicated to making the federal government more effective. We work across administrations to help transform the way government operates by increasing collaboration, accountability, efficiency and innovation. Visit [ourpublicservice.org](http://ourpublicservice.org) to learn more. Follow us on social @PublicService and subscribe today to get the latest federal news, information on upcoming Partnership programs and events, and more.