

Trump Picks 'A-Team' for Healthcare Transition as ACA Repeal Looms

Sources say President-elect Donald Trump's transition team for HHS will be led by Andrew Bremberg, who worked at the agency under President George W. Bush and was an adviser to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and during Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's presidential bid. Bremberg was on Walker's team when the candidate unveiled a healthcare proposal that included repealing the Affordable Care Act and splitting Medicaid into smaller programs with separate funding.

Trump has also reportedly selected Paula Stannard to reportedly concentrate on healthcare reform measures. Stannard is a former deputy general counsel and acting general counsel of the HHS to advise more broadly on health reform initiatives. Stannard oversaw the food and drug, civil rights and legislation divisions of the 450-attorney HHS Office of the General Counsel. She also provided legal advice and counsel to senior HHS officials, including secretaries Tommy Thompson and Michael Leavitt.

"They bring a basic philosophy that we can advance our healthcare system by making sure that the patient is at the center of every single reform and that reforms are actionable - and result in less government intrusion," Peter Pitts, president of the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest and a former associate commissioner at the FDA, said of both Bremberg and Stannard.

Bremberg worked for the Mitt Romney campaign in 2012 with the direct responsibility for laying the groundwork for the repeal of the ACA.

"He understands the importance of an Obamacare replacement plan based on free market principles that will bring about affordable, accessible, quality care for all Americans," said Sally Pipes, former president and CEO of the Pacific Research Institute and one of Rudy Giuliani's four healthcare advisers in his bid for the Republican nomination for president in 2008.

Steven R. Eastaugh, a former adviser to President Barack Obama who helped write the ACA, said the picks give him confidence.

"(Trump) is choosing people that aren't crazy, just conservative in their thinking," said Eastaugh. "If there is going to be a retrenchment of the ACA, there would hopefully be minimal losses to access to care, and [Bremberg and Stannard] do care about things like access."

Stannard is the ideal choice to provide legal counsel to Trump if he fulfills his vow to tear down Obama's signature healthcare reform law, said Thomas Scully, who served as CMS administrator under President George W. Bush and had Stannard on his confirmation team.

Bremberg also has a knack for picking good staffers according to Tevi Troy, a former deputy HHS secretary in the Bush administration and the president of the American Health Policy Institute.

Others rumored to help advise the president-elect on healthcare include Ado Machida, a former corporate lobbyist and domestic policy aide to former Vice President Dick Cheney and Carlos Diaz-Rosillo, a lecturer at Harvard University.

Diaz-Rosillo will advise on what can be done via a presidential executive order. His research focuses on the American presidency, campaigns and elections, political leadership, public policy, and comparative chief executive politics.

Machida will advise generally on domestic policy, overseeing not just Stannard but also other advisers that will work with Trump on other topics such as VA reform, regulatory reform, education and energy independence.