



Speak Out Now

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Trump Cabinet Picks: Bad for Our Health

Trump's latest Cabinet appointments reveal an administration even more determined to prioritize the wealthy and powerful at the expense of working people. His selections for key healthcare roles, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (RFK Jr.) as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Dr. Mehmet Oz to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), signal a dangerous shift that could leave millions of people's health and safety at risk.

Kennedy, a right-wing environmental lawyer with no relevant experience in public health, has made a career out of peddling dangerous conspiracy theories. He has a history of opposing vaccines and spreading misinformation, such as linking vaccines and autism. He has advocated for removing fluoride from drinking water, which could have disastrous effects on dental health, especially for those without routine access to dental care.

Kennedy has also pledged to "clear out" entire departments within the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency responsible for ensuring the safety of pharmaceuticals, food, cosmetics, and more. This action would allow corporations to cut even more corners when putting health-related products onto the market for profit. While it's true that the FDA's reliance on industry funding poses serious concerns, the solution isn't to eliminate regulations that protect public health. Under Kennedy's leadership, critical, lifesaving measures could be dismantled entirely.

Dr. Oz, a celebrity doctor with a history of promoting unproven treatments and questionable medical advice, is equally ill-suited to lead the centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. His appointment shows Trump's preference for loyalty and fame over expertise and experience in public service.

Under Dr. Oz's leadership, Trump has promised that he will "cut waste" in the department, with likely efforts to further privatize Medicare and Medicaid. This would erode vital healthcare protections and reduce regulatory oversight that ensures the safety and effectiveness of treatments. This could make healthcare even more expensive and inaccessible for working-class people.

There are also fears that Kennedy and Oz will significantly restrict access to reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare.

In addition, the Trump Administration will likely limit legal access to abortion and attempt to remove anti-discrimination healthcare protections. Women, trans people, and millions of others could be left without access to healthcare that meets their needs, even if insured.

These appointments are part of a broader pattern in Trump's Cabinet: filling positions with individuals whose interests align with the super-rich and powerful corporations, rather than ordinary people. Trump's selections for U.S. Cabinet are worth a combined \$340 billion! From dismantling public education to slashing environmental protections, this administration is laser-focused on enriching its wealthy allies while attacking the rights and welfare of working people. As mentioned in our previous editorial, Trump's Cabinet picks are likely to have disastrous effects on our lives.

The health and safety of our communities were never handed to us by politicians. They were won through the determined efforts of social movements – fighting for public health programs, workplace safety regulations, and access to affordable care. The FDA, for example, exists today because relentless organizing by journalists, scientists, and grassroots activists forced the government to create consumer protections for food and drugs. These hard-fought gains are under threat, and it's clear that we can't rely on the government to protect them.

We see the effects of healthcare privatization today: the practices of UnitedHealthcare, a health insurance giant with a high rate of claim denials, likely drove an individual to the extreme measure of assassinating the CEO. However, lone ranger attacks on individuals do not solve the system-wide stripping of our access to healthcare and are not the solution to the issues we will continue to face under Trump.

As Trump's Cabinet gears up to attack healthcare access and public safety, it's up to us to respond using our collective power. We cannot accept these cuts! We must organize to defend our rights with our neighbors, classmates, and co-workers to force them to stop. We have done it in the past and will have to do it again. Our health and safety will have to be up to us.

The Triangle: North Carolina: **The Storm of Evictions after Helene**

It's been a little over two months since Hurricane Helene caused immense destruction, killing over 100 people in North Carolina alone. In a region where many people's livelihoods depended on the tourist industry that is now in shambles, what do people do when they can't pay rent? Government assistance is available to some people, but nowhere near enough. As of mid-October, 225 new eviction cases were filed in Buncombe County. Even when people live in units that are unsafe or lack necessities, tenants in North Carolina don't have the legal right to withhold rent.

Eviction moratoriums were passed during COVID; why not now? A hurricane may be a "natural disaster," but the real disaster is a system that denies us basic resources, like shelter, that we need for survival.

Bay Area, California: **Hiring Freeze for the Holidays**

This article is based on the Speak Out Now healthcare newsletter at Kaiser and Highland Hospitals in Oakland, CA.

Alameda Health System (AHS, which includes Highland Hospital in Oakland) sent out an email last week that most new hiring will be deferred until the New Year. They gave a confusing explanation about their line of credit, which helps fund operations, being nearly maxed out. So now, as if the belt wasn't tight enough, the administration is demanding workers tighten it even more.

How can it be that in one of the biggest counties, in one of the wealthiest states, in the wealthiest country, there aren't enough funds to provide for the health needs of the highest risk population? How is healthcare not a basic priority that is always funded adequately?



Baltimore, Maryland: **Sanitation Workers Speak Out**

Two trash collection workers at Baltimore's Department of Public Works (DPW) have died on the job from unsafe working conditions in 2024. Recent investigations have exposed how dangerous and undignified it is to work at DPW; there is often no access to water, air conditioning, or bathroom breaks. On December 5, another DPW worker suffered severe injuries on the job.

Now, a few DPW workers are stepping up to resist the hazards that the city forces on them. Workers, their families, and local supporters came together to speak out in front of City Hall and again at the Mayor's Christmas Parade. Their demands include adequate safety equipment and procedures, improved working conditions, and fair wages.

We shouldn't accept that Baltimore's government risks the lives of its most essential workers. We must support workers everywhere standing up and speaking out against injustices!

Newark, New Jersey: **Drought in NJ**

In the summer and fall of 2024, New Jersey/New York area faced the worst drought since the 1890s, when recorded rainfall records began. Few rainy days this summer, combined with above average temperatures, put the entire northeastern U.S. in moderate drought conditions, while most of New Jersey and southern New York State have remained in severe drought. Reservoirs in New York and north Jersey are well below normal levels. This summer and fall, New Jersey alone has experienced an estimated 500 wildfires. A few burned for weeks and forced hundreds of evacuations.

These conditions aren't normal. Things will get worse unless we take action to stop the climate problem at its root.

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. We aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich — the bosses of the big corporations and banks — keep the wealth and make all the decisions. Working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. When we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.