

## Management deficit at the Executive Branch

The contrast between the Trump Administration nominees for cabinet-level positions and the Biden Administration's is mind-boggling. While Trump attempted to get top-level managers to accept his offers of senior positions, Joe Biden's criteria were rooted in 'diversity.' His checklist down-prioritized real world non-government management experience but concentrated on checking the boxes of gender, race, ethnicity or political loyalty. Some examples include: Xavier Becerra, Health and Human Services Secretary; Jennifer Granholm, Energy Secretary; Pete Buttigieg, Transportation Secretary and Deb Haaland, Interior Secretary.

Predictably, the L.A. Times was over the moon when Becerra, a native Angelino and former California Attorney General was nominated by Biden who praised his experience as a lawmaker who helped craft the Affordable Care Act and as a lawyer who fiercely defended it in court from Republican attacks. The Times called Becerra's nomination a "historic choice" (read: the first Hispanic to hold the position) and said that "Becerra isn't afraid to fight" (he sued the Trump Administration over 100 times). Joe Biden didn't seem to think Becerra's obvious lack of direct healthcare experience was a negative. His Democrat Party credentials and his Hispanic heritage were enough to qualify him to lead 80,000 employees with a \$120 billion yearly budget.

Diversity boxes checked: Hispanic, Trump hater/Democrat operative, big state constituency (California)

Jennifer Granholm, former attorney and former Governor of Michigan is another remarkably unqualified person to head up one of the largest government Departments (DOE has 14,382 federal civilian employees and 93,094 contract employees with a yearly budget of nearly \$32 billion). By many accounts of many Michiganders she was a miserable governor. Michigan's budget crisis saw Standard & Poor downgrade the state's credit rating from AA to AA minus. Additionally, the crisis contributed to sinking approval ratings for Granholm which went from 43% in August 2007 to a low of 32% in December 2007 distinguishing her as a governor with one of the lowest approval ratings for any governor in the United States.

Diversity boxes checked: Female, pivotal big electoral vote state former governor (Michigan)

Not wanting to leave another demographic group out that would complete the political color palette, Biden named Congresswoman and half American Indian (the other half is Norwegian by her father) Deb Haaland to the position of Secretary of the Interior. The Department has the responsibility for overseeing roughly 420 million acres of federal lands, nearly 55 million acres of tribal lands, more than 700 million acres of subsurface minerals and about 2.5 billion acres of the outer continental shelf. It has 70,000 employees and about a \$13 billion budget. This was arguably THE biggest score for the Biden Administration in terms of 'righting America's historical wrongs' by appointing an Indian to take care of Federal land. Before her nomination vote, the Lakota People's Law Project, a social justice organization, started a petition supported by more than 120 tribal leaders in favor of appointing her. "Naming a Native American to lead the Department of the Interior honors the sacrifice Native tribes have made for the growth of our country, as well as rewards them for their participation in our democracy," read the petition that got nearly 30,000 signatures. "Most importantly, it provides this important leadership role to a group that culturally is best suited to protect our natural resources in a sustainable and honorable manner."

It seems that the takeaway from this nomination is that 'cultural suitability' takes the place of management expertise.

Then there is the darling of the alternative lifestyle community, former Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, Transportation Secretary, Pete Buttigieg. For the record, South Bend employs about 1,000 people to service a community the size of 100,000 people, and it has a budget of \$386 million. Buttigieg's new Department has 55,000 employees with an annual budget of \$98 billion. Pete

Buttigieg does have some experience in dealing with transportation issues, however. He *pioneered* South Bend's Smart Streets program which got rid of one-way streets and expanded sidewalks and biking downtown. During his administration the city also installed several roundabouts, but as a local paper reported, "the city's streets were always a big challenge." Very impressive if you're a South Bender. Many expressed dismay on why Buttigieg would get such a responsible cabinet position with so little in the way of experience. One source that knew both the Administration and Buttigieg well was quoted as saying that he thought it was about optics and having a diverse cabinet and that, "Frankly, I think his age and his sexual orientation were probably factors in Biden's decision."

Diversity boxes checked: Youthful, well-spoken, alternative lifestyle, small-town Midwestern boy

Finally, there is Biden's next in command, Vice-President and former San Francisco District Attorney, former California Attorney General and former Senator, Kamala Devi Harris, a woman of color and mixed ethnicity (East Indian and Jamaican). If you're keeping diversity score, she was also a woman of hyphenated 'firsts' in the VP slot: first African-American woman VP and first Asian-American woman VP, first Californian woman VP, etc. etc. When it comes to managing her office and her portfolio, though, she's zero for two. Her lack of situational awareness and her tendency to create a dramatic atmosphere out of ordinary situations and to ignore the seriousness of actual ones is testimony to her inability to identify with real American problems such as the chaos at our southern border. Her biggest problem, however, is her inauthenticity and that she tries too hard to be likable - and fails - largely because her attempts are seen as both strained and contrived.

Boxes checked: Female, mixed race, coastal Democrat, ruthless politician

The few above-mentioned Cabinet Secretaries and the VP are but the tip of the Executive Branch management deficit iceberg. They are evidence that the Administration's HR Department and political advisors care little about executives' ability to lead, to plan or to implement, effectively. Diversity has replaced competency in hiring America's top government jobs and until the Administration and the mis-manager-in-chief learn that 'diversity is not a skill' they will continue to endanger our government institutions and our economy.

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