



## Secretary of Energy-designate Rick Perry

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In an ironic twist, President-elect Donald Trump has chosen Texas Governor Rick Perry as his secretary of energy. The Energy Department is the same agency Perry wanted to eliminate—and then forgot to name it—when asked, during the Republican presidential primary debate in 2011, which departments he would shut down.

Perry beat out two other candidates for the job: Senator Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia) and Ray Washburne, a Texas investor working in oil and gas operations. Given national security components of the energy sector, some observers have criticized the selection of Perry, whose expertise is limited to fossil fuel extraction. Under the Obama administration, the Energy Department has focused on promoting clean energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Perry's selection would appear to be a nod to the Republican emphasis on energy sources like coal and oil.

Former Senator Byron Dorgan (D-North Dakota), finds the Perry nomination “so perplexing.” Dorgan chaired the Senate committee with jurisdiction over energy during his time in the Senate. He believes Perry does not understand the role of the Energy Department in dealing with nuclear weapons; the department is responsible for overseeing the nation's nuclear weapons complex. However, former Energy Secretaries Spencer Abraham (R) and Bill Richardson (D) suggest Perry will adapt to his role at Energy. According to a December 13 *New York Times* article, about 60 percent of the department's budget is devoted to the National Nuclear Security Administration, which defines its mission as enhancing national security through military application of nuclear science. Perry's critics wonder whether he comprehends the importance of the nuclear component of the department.

Further, the *Times* article also noted that the last two Department of Energy secretaries, Ernest J. Moniz of MIT and Steven Chu of Stanford, held doctorates in physics and had impressive academic credentials; Dr. Chu, in addition, had been awarded a Nobel Prize. By contrast, Perry holds a bachelor's degree in animal science from Texas A&M, which many feel does not prepare him for the job, citing his lack of experience and qualifications to manage the nuclear components of the Energy Department.

Like President-elect Trump, Perry remains skeptical of climate change. In 2010 he wrote the book, *Fed Up! Our Fight to Save America from Washington*, in which he called the established

science of human-caused climate change a contrived phony mess. Perry's views also align with those of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, tapped to run the Environmental Protection Agency, who is also skeptical of climate change. The views of Trump, Perry, and Pruitt do not bode well for those in the environmental and scientific community who believe that climate change is real and presents a serious cause for concern.

While it seems almost a guarantee that Perry will target the Energy Department's climate change programs, the larger question of doing away with the department altogether remains unknown. If it were eliminated, the administration of its nuclear programs likely would be scattered among several US government agencies, running the risk of little inter-agency cooperation on such a vital national security issue.