

Is Donald Trump Following in Ronald Reagan's Footsteps?

The Donald Trump transition team made more moves over the weekend, naming his pick for interior secretary and throwing out strong hints about who will run the State Department starting in a little over a month.

Devin Henry of *The Hill* reports, "President-elect Donald Trump is expected to name Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) to lead the Interior Department, a source close to the transition team told *The Hill* Friday.

"Trump will tap McMorris-Rodgers, a five-term Republican who represents eastern Washington and is the chair of the House GOP Conference, to lead the department. *The New York Times* first reported the news."

Trump's selection of McMorris-Rodgers is clearly a nod to the party establishment as she's part of Paul Ryan's House leadership team and is not exactly known as a bomb-throwing limited government conservative. Putting her in charge of the nation's federal lands and national parks may seem like a harmless move on the surface, but a lot of damage can still be done from such a lofty position if the wrong person is making the decisions.

According to *The Hill* story, McMorris-Rodgers is very pro-energy growth at least. "She has voted in favor of expanding fossil fuel development on public lands and in federal areas off-shore. She opposes efforts to change the royalty rates on federal coal mining, something pushed hard by Obama's Interior Department, and voted for a GOP budget that would allow the sale of public lands to mining companies."

Assuming this is true, I doubt McMorris-Rodgers will engender much opposition from conservative groups as the nominee for

Interior Secretary. Private ownership of property is incredibly important and was a major priority of the Founding Fathers. We can only hope the new leader of the effort to secure them feels the same way.

For the all-important secretary of state position, reports indicate Trump will choose Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, with John Bolton running the day-to-day operation from Foggy Bottom.

With the formal announcements of Interior and State likely coming up this week, most of the major personnel would seem to be in place for the new Trump administration. It's safe to say, conservatives are generally enthused by Trump's selections.

And there are a lot of reasons why we should be, too. Andrew C. McCarthy of *National Review* wrote, "Well, if there had been a second Clinton administration, do you think we'd have gotten (Scott) Pruitt (at EPA)? How about Jeff Sessions at Justice, or General James Mattis at Defense? Or Trump's promised upgrade in immigration enforcement to be carried out by General John Kelly, the clear-eyed So-Com commander who has warned about radical Islam's inroads in Central and South America (and a Gold Star dad whose son laid down his life in Afghanistan fighting our jihadist enemies)?

"Do you figure Hillary would have tapped teachers-union scourge Betsy DeVos for the Education Department? Or a staunch Obamacare critic such as Congressman (and doctor) Tom Price to run HHS?"

The answer is a resounding no. The highly respected McCarthy goes on to argue that Trump should not overplay his hand in trying to substitute populism for principled limited government conservatism, since he believes Trump's victory was largely due to the country's opposition to awful Hillary Clinton, not his own slate of policies.

But McCarthy's main purpose is to express relief over Trump's moves as president-elect thus far. While it's true Trump has done some odd things in transition (McCarthy mentions the president-elect's meetings with Al Gore and with the editorial board of *The New York Times* as examples), his personnel actions have been solid and envisage an administration that will govern from a conservative point-of-view.

I personally think it's because Trump himself realized somewhere along the line that many of the conservative policies have basically been ignored since 1989 are the key to "making America great again." It's not that Trump himself has become a convert to the cause of the Constitution, and it's probably not even solely due to the great work of Mike Pence.

It's because freedom and individual liberty work. And so does federalism.

Many conservatives argued all along that Trump would not be the "disaster" that was so gloomily predicted by the #NeverTrump contingent. There were plenty of signs during the primaries and presidential campaign indicating Trump would stay close enough to traditional Republican thought so as to not make people regret supporting him.

McCarthy's excellent piece expresses these realizations (though McCarthy was not #NeverTrump, he was highly critical of the president-elect during the lead-up to the election). Though it's perhaps a tad early to declare Trump will be successful on the level of Ronald Reagan, there are a lot of things to like about his early engagements.

Steve Moore wrote at Fox News, "Conservatives shouldn't fret too much over Trump's deviations from Reagan policies. So far the Cabinet appointments and the policy priorities of his incoming administration have been nearly impeccable.

"He's also showing a willingness to reach out to the other side to score policy victories and avoid paralysis. That is

right out of the Reagan playbook. The Gipper was a master political strategist, perhaps even more than he was an orthodox conservative. That's how you rack up victories that are durable, a lesson Barack Obama never learned."

Conservatives should not forget that our policies will not succeed without popular support. For a long time many of us didn't believe Donald Trump was the right one to articulate our message and then carry it out if elected.

But he's proving to be at least as good as advertised, if not better. And America's got a much improved outlook because of it. {eoa}