

President-Elect Trump Won Week One on Capitol Hill

By all accounts, what was supposed to be a “brutal” first week of confirmation hearings in the Senate for President-elect Donald Trump and his Cabinet-level appointees wasn’t.

Byron York of the *Washington Examiner* put it like this:

Seven Trump picks—Attorney General-designate Jeff Sessions, Homeland Security Secretary-designate John Kelly, Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson, Transportation Secretary-designate Elaine Chao, Defense Secretary-designate James Mattis, Housing and Urban Development Secretary-designate Ben Carson and CIA Director-designate Mike Pompeo—faced Senate committees this week. The number included three of the so-called Big Four Cabinet positions—attorney general, secretary of state and secretary of defense. (A hearing for the fourth of the Big Four, Treasury Secretary-designate Stephen Mnuchin, has not yet been scheduled.)

Some of the hearings went so well that press accounts declared them as a “lovefest.” Chao’s hearing certainly qualified, as did Kelly’s. Others, like Mattis’, were smooth and businesslike. Still others, like Sessions’, ended up being far less adversarial than expected, either because Democratic attacks lacked energy and focus, or the nominee was able to deftly handle the situation, or both. Only Tillerson’s was problematic, due to a combination of the nominee’s lack of experience in the field and a mini-drama set off by a senator of Tillerson’s own party. Even with that, though, Tillerson looks to be in solid shape.

Following the Martin Luther King Jr. Day break, the second week of scheduled confirmation hearings—leading directly to Trump’s inauguration on Friday—is about to get underway, with

up to six more nominees slated to appear before Senate committees. Among them:

- Secretary of Education-designate Betsy DeVos
- Secretary of Labor-designate Andrew Puzder (may be delayed)
- Secretary of Health and Human Services-designate Tom Price
- Secretary of Commerce-designate Wilbur Ross
- Ambassador to the United Nations-designate Nikki Haley (may be delayed)
- Secretary of the Treasury-designate Steve Mnuchin

Democrats, still licking their wounds over failing to stall out the confirmation process with the first seven Trump nominees, has been begging Republicans to slow things down. But there's reason to believe there could be some real obstacles for at least one of the president-elect's Cabinet appointees.

As York wrote:

So the incoming administration could well lose a nominee. But the bottom line is that amid tumult and controversy about every aspect of his soon-to-be presidency, Donald Trump is moving ahead. And in its first week of tests on Capitol Hill, the new administration came out the winner.

Trump has vowed his entire Cabinet will get confirmed. There remains one position yet unfilled—Secretary of Agriculture—which should be filled soon. {eoa}