

The immediate environmentalist reaction to Rex Tillerson and Rick Perry — Trump's choices to run the Departments of State and Energy — is that these are disastrous choices, like Trump's selection of climate change denier Scott Pruitt to run EPA. That's understandable. After all, Tillerson is the CEO of Exxon. As to Perry, the Washington Post headline says it all: "Rick Perry is picked to head Energy Department, an agency he once vowed to abolish." But that reaction is too hasty. In environmental terms, these are probably as good as you could get from Trump — not to say they're good in absolute terms, but less bad than the alternatives.

Tillerson, ExxonMobil's chief executive and Trump's nominee for Secretary of State, [has](#) "repeatedly said that he would support putting a price on carbon as long as it was 'revenue neutral.'" And Exxon has repositioned itself, after its earlier history of covertly supporting climate denial. Exxon had [this](#) to say about the Paris Agreement:

"Today marks the entering into force of the Paris climate agreement. The agreement is an important step forward by world governments in addressing the serious risks of climate change.

"ExxonMobil supports the work of the Paris signatories, acknowledges the ambitious goals of this agreement and believes the company has a constructive role to play in developing solutions."

Perry is also less awful than he appears. As it turns out, he was a champion of wind energy in Texas. According to the [Texas Tribune](#):

"His legacy on the fossil side of things is very sound, but on the wind side, he's done tremendous things to move the state forward," said Jeff Clark, executive director of the Austin-based Wind Coalition, an advocacy group. 'Under Rick Perry, wind in Texas has moved from alternative energy to being a mainstream component of our power supply.'"

And in fact, Texas now leads the nation in wind power. Perry didn't, however, provide much support for solar in Texas. He's also a huge fan of oil and gas, as you'd expect of a former Texas governor, but the Department of Energy doesn't really have much to do with that part of the energy sector. So you can't call Perry a great choice, but he's not quite Scott Pruitt either.

Thus, if you take as a given the fact that the person making the selection was Donald Trump, these are not at all the worst possible choices environmentally. Of course, some might think that's a very low bar.