

Who will head EPA?

Various lists of possible candidates have been circulating in the media. I've put together the names that have been mentioned in places like *Politico* and the *Washington Post*, along with the results of some *very* quick research. I'd appreciate hearing from readers who may be familiar with some of these possible nominees. Take this with an extra-large grain of salt.

The list goes from horrible to not so bad. Myron Ebell, one of the candidates, is a climate denier and could very well be the choice, particularly if someone like Steve Bannon is involved in the decision. On the other hand, he would be hugely controversial and would probably be opposed by Priebus and Pence (who is now heading the transition and may want to avoid such controversial choices). There are also a number of career professionals on the list and one or two who appear relatively moderate at first sight (Aiello from New Jersey, Grady from Gryphon Investors). If I had to bet, I'd go with Jeffrey Holmstead being the ultimate choice. He's a lawyer who is firmly identified with the fossil fuel industry, seems to be a very capable guy, and would be less controversial than Ebell. But really, that's just a wild guess. [Nov. 18, update: the [NY Times](#) is listing Ebell, Grady, and Holmstead as the frontrunners.] Here's the list:

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Joe Aiello, director, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Environmental Safety and Quality Assurance. He seems to be a seasoned professional who would be a steady hand at EPA. (See [here](#).) I'm doubtful that Trump will go with such a conventional choice, especially because Chris Christie (probably Aiello's big sponsor) is now out of favor.

Carol Comer, commissioner, Indiana Department of Environmental Management (a Pence appointee). She was previously General Counsel at IDEM. She seems to be a career bureaucrat, and on a quick look I didn't find any huge controversies about her work in Indiana. The fact that Pence is running the transition team presumably makes her a stronger prospect than she would have been before.

Myron Ebell A director at the Competitive Enterprise Institute and climate change denier. Just about the worst possible choice from an environmental point of view.

Robert E. Grady Gryphon Investors partner. He was heavily involved in passage of the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments. Probably too moderate to be the final pick.

Jeffrey R. Holmstead. Now a fossil fuel industry representative; ran the Air Division at EPA under George W. Bush. Seems to be a conventional anti-regulatory conservative who would favor the fossil fuel industry, but not a bomb-thrower.

Leslie Rutledge. She was recently elected Attorney General of Arkansas. She has apparently been involved in litigation against the Obama EPA, but she doesn't have any particular background in environmental matters or so far as I can tell any particular interest in them. I think she's more likely as EPA General Counsel. On the other hand, Priebus and others may think that they really should include a woman *somewhere* among the cabinet level nominees, and they don't have that many female prospects on their list.

This is definitely not an exclusive list of possibilities. Other people who have been mentioned include two other state attorneys general (West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey and Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt), two more with experience in state EPAs (Craig Butler from Ohio, and Kathleen Hartnett White from Texas), another lawyer (Roger Martella at Sidley & Austin), and Rep. Andy Harris from Maryland (not really sure why he's been mentioned). And who knows who else might want the job? [Nov. 19 update: a late addition to the list is Mike Catanzaro, a Washington lobbyist, who has extensive background on energy and environmental issues in the Bush Administration and as a congressional staffer.]

Normally, the first priority of incoming Presidents is to make picks for DOD, State, and Treasury. EPA is likely to be in the second tier of decisions.