

## **As Of February 22, 2021, At Least 24 Trump Appointees Have Reportedly Burrowed Their Way Into Civil Service Jobs In The Federal Government Or Refused To Step Down After The Transition Between Administrations**

### **At Least Four Trump Appointees Are Known To Have Burrowed Into The National Security Apparatus As Career Federal Employees.**

- **Michael Ellis.** “For instance, one political appointee was recently hired as the White House’s chief national security lawyer — a permanent ‘career’ position protected by civil service regulations — even though he reportedly lacked intelligence expertise. [WaPo, [1/06/21](#)]
  - “Michael Ellis, an official on the National Security Council, shifted over to the National Security Agency as legal counsel, which takes him out of a political appointee role at the White House and into a civil servant position, two sources confirmed to CNN. This makes Ellis harder to fire once the Biden administration comes in, the sources said, adding that the strategy is called ‘burrowing.’” [CNN, [11/10/20](#)]
- **Kash Patel.** “Another former Nunes aide, Kash Patel, will become chief of staff to acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller, according to an administration official and a US defense official. Patel, who most recently served as senior director for counterterrorism at the White House National Security Council, has a “very close” working relationship with Miller, the administration official said.” [CNN, [11/10/20](#)]
- **Michael Holley.** “Michael Holley was a regional director for the Florida Republican Party, helped run the 2016 GOP convention and then worked on the inauguration before being hired for White House special projects. In 2019, he was appointed White House liaison for the Department of Homeland Security, and earlier this year he became a staff action officer in the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, a career position.” [Propublica, [12/03/20](#)]
- **Tracy Short.** “One of the highest-profile positions went to Tracy Short, who built his career in government litigating immigration cases, mostly in Texas. In 2017, he became principal legal advisor to Immigration and Customs Enforcement as it embraced a hard line on deportations. And in July, he was appointed chief immigration judge at the DOJ’s Executive Office for Immigration Review — a prosecutor now running a court system that decides asylum cases.” [Politico, [1/19/21](#)]

### **At Least Nine Trump Appointees Are Known To Have Burrowed Into Career Civil Service Jobs With Environmental Regulators**

- **Brandon Middleton.** “Also on Democrats’ watch list is Brandon Middleton, a former Senate staffer for Jeff Sessions who Trump appointed to be a deputy solicitor at the Interior Department in 2017. Last year, Middleton was converted into the chief counsel of the Department of Energy’s Environmental Management Consolidated Business Center — a career position.” [Politico, [1/19/21](#)]

- **Christopher Prandoni.** “Christopher Prandoni was just 29 when he joined President Donald Trump’s administration as associate director for natural resources at the Council on Environmental Quality. Last year, he hopped over to the Interior Department and became a close adviser to Secretary David Bernhardt, sometimes attending multiple meetings a day with the agency head. In April, Bernhardt named Prandoni, only three years out of law school, to a \$114,000-a-year position that’s part of the career civil service. His appointment as a judge in the Interior Department’s Office of Hearings and Appeals, which arbitrates land-use disputes, drew sharp criticism from environmental groups concerned that Prandoni would infuse ideology into decisions and undermine the panel’s integrity.” [Propublica, [12/03/20](#)]
- **Gregory Sheehan.** “Gregory Sheehan was appointed deputy director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in June 2017. (Then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke tried to make him director, but Sheehan lacked the position’s required scientific degree.) [...] Sheehan served 14 months before resigning, a spokesman said, to spend more time with his family in Utah. But in August, after the previous director retired, Sheehan was hired for a \$166,910-a-year job as director of the Bureau of Land Management’s office in his home state.” [Propublica, [12/03/20](#)]
- **Barry Bushue.** “Another new BLM state director is Barry Bushue, a longtime leader of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation’s largest agriculture industry lobbying group. Bushue was appointed to run the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency office for Oregon in 2018. Earlier this year, he was transferred to a career position running BLM’s Oregon/Washington division — the site of fierce debates around the federal government’s authority over cattle grazing.” [Propublica, [12/03/20](#)]
- **David LaCerte.** “And just last week, the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board announced that David LaCerte, a Trump appointee who had been serving as deputy associate director at the Office of Personnel Management, would be joining the agency for a three-year term as a senior adviser and executive counsel. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a nonprofit that supports government workers who protect the environment, flagged the move as a ‘political hire’ of an ‘unqualified crony senior executive.’” [Politico, [1/19/21](#)]
- **Michael Brown.** “Michael Brown, a former coal executive who was national political director for Republican Ben Carson’s campaign in 2016 for president, had been deputy general counsel at Energy. Brown was recently approved for a job representing the agency in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.” [Washington Post, [01/24/21](#)]
- **Kyle Nicholas.** “Kyle Nicholas, a political appointee with a health-care background who served as an adviser in Energy’s international affairs offices under Trump, was just posted to a similar job in Brussels. The appointments were first reported by E&E News.” [Washington Post, [01/24/21](#)]
- **Jason Hill.** “Similarly, in March, Bernhardt appointed Jason Hill, a former Interior deputy solicitor, to be an administrative law judge at the Interior Board of Land Appeals.” [E&E News, [12/09/20](#)]

- **Mark Lambrecht.** “Aaron Weiss, a deputy director at the left-leaning Center for Western Priorities, noted there are ‘burrowing-adjacent’ hires like Mark Lambrecht, a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation lobbyist who was just hired to be National Landscape Conservation System assistant director at the Bureau of Land Management’s new Colorado headquarters [...]” [E&E News, [12/09/20](#)]

### **At Least Three Trump Appointees Managed To Burrow Into Civil Service Jobs At The Department Of Justice.**

- **John Lott.** “In December, Democratic senators wrote to the Justice Department demanding information on the hiring of gun rights advocate John Lott to serve as a senior adviser in the Office of Justice Programs, a move they said gives them ‘concerns about the Department’s compliance with requirements designed to maintain the continued integrity of the nonpartisan career civil service.’” [Politico, [1/19/21](#)]
- **Prerak Shah.** “Prerak Shah, a member of the right-leaning Federalist Society who served as a counselor to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, defending cases on conservative causes celebre like voter ID laws and school prayer. He then became Cruz’s chief of staff before joining Trump’s DOJ, and earlier this year he was appointed as an assistant U.S. attorney in the northern district of Texas.” [ProPublica, [12/03/20](#)]
- **Jordan von Bokern.** “Jordan von Bokern clerked for Judge Amy Coney Barrett, recently named to the U.S. Supreme Court, before being appointed counsel in the DOJ’s Office of Legal Policy, which directs initiatives such as coordinating judicial nominations with the White House. In April, he was converted into a career trial attorney.” [ProPublica, [12/03/20](#)]

### **Two CFPB Officials Brought On By Then-Director Kathy Kraninger Have Stayed On Despite Her Resignation From The Bureau.**

- **Bryan A. Schneider.** “Yesterday’s big CFPB news was that former director Kathy Kraninger resigned. But the departures also included Deputy Director Tom Pahl and several political appointees. [...] However, the list doesn’t include key people Kraninger hired for key civil service positions. So Supervision, Enforcement and Fair Lending Associate Director Bryan Schneider and Enforcement Director Tom Ward are still in place.” [Tweet Thread by Evan Weinberger, [01/21/21](#)]
  - **Bryan A. Schneider Was Still Listed As Associate Director Of Supervision, Enforcement & Fair Lending On A CFPB Structure Table Updated On January 22, 2021.** [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, accessed [02/17/21](#)]
- **Robert G. Cameron.** Robert Cameron was listed as Private Education Loan Ombudsman on a CFPB structure table updated on January 22, 2021. [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

### **At Least Six Other Trump Appointees Have Burrowed Or Declined To Step Down Despite The Transition Between Administrations.**

- **Dept. Of Ed. Financial Student Aid COO Mark Brown.** Leadership, goals and standards at FSA are evaluated differently than in most other areas of government. FSA is what's known as a performance-based organization, a structure created in the 1990s as part of then-Vice President Al Gore's reinventing government initiative. [...] they're charged with focusing on a set of strategic goals and outcomes as part of a five-year performance plan required by Congress and set by the Secretary of Education and FSA COO. [...] That latitude also means that the COO is somewhat shielded from political whims. Their term is five years and the Secretary of Education can only dismiss him for cause, which is why the head of FSA typically doesn't change with administration. But the President can still remove the COO at his discretion." [MarketWatch, [1/28/21](#)]
- **Lawrence Connell.** "Documents obtained by the I-Team show the list includes former Trump transition team member Lawrence 'Larry' Connell, who was tapped to lead the embattled Washington D.C. VA Medical Center back in 2017. He then served as chief of staff within the Veterans Health Administration until May of this year, when documents show he was approved for a higher-paying civil service job leading a VA Medical Center hospital in New England." [NBC Washington, [11/25/20](#)]
- **Amy Simon.** "As the new Democratic leaders take the reins of the DOL subagency responsible for assisting states with unemployment benefits, they may soon inherit the Trump administration's deputy assistant secretary at ETA, Amy Simon. Her bid to switch from a political role to one of ETA's top career executive positions was approved by the subagency's former leadership in the prior administration's final weeks. Simon's conversion, a late-term executive branch practice known as "burrowing in," is pending approval from the federal government's central HR agency, which has the power to reject her hiring, according to five sources with knowledge of the matter." [Bloomberg Law, [01/28/21](#)]
- **Jonathan D. Midgett.** Jonathan D. Midgett, originally appointed as Executive Assistant to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commissioner on October 12, 2017, was approved as Consumer Ombudsman in the same office on April 12, 2020. [[Office of Personnel Management](#) via [Nextgov](#), 12/04/20]
- **Zachariah James Gambill.** Zachariah James Gambill, originally appointed as Advisor in the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service on October 15, 2017, was approved as Program Application Specialist in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on July 5, 2020. [[Office of Personnel Management](#) via [Nextgov](#), 12/04/20]
- **Trent Benishek.** "In addition, the week before the election, Trent Benishek was moved from the White House counsel's office to be general counsel of the GSA, the agency that oversees the presidential transition." [CNN, [11/10/20](#)]