

From: POLITICO Pro Energy
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Subject: Afternoon Energy: Trump speaks on infrastructure — Paris exit unpopular except with GOP voters — WSJ analysis: Oil exports double
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By Kelsey Tamborrino | 06/07/2017 04:05 PM EDT

With help from Eric Wolff

TRUMP SPEAKS ON INFRASTRUCTURE: Speaking in Cincinnati this afternoon, President Donald Trump decried the state of America's infrastructure, particularly its crumbling system of locks and dams — despite his own budget blueprint that calls for deep funding cuts to the same programs. The president spoke on the banks of the Ohio River with a barge filled with West Virginia coal floating behind him and argued that the inland waterways system is vital to the country's energy, agricultural and manufacturing sectors, but has suffered from lack of investment, Annie Snider [reports](#). "These critical corridors of commerce depend on a dilapidated system of locks and dams that is more than half a century old and their condition ... is in very, very bad shape. It continues to decay," Trump said, pointing to an \$8.7 billion maintenance backlog.

But his budget wouldn't provide much help. The Trump administration's request would cut the Army Corps of Engineers' construction account in half — providing enough to cover work on just a single lock-and-dam project on the system, Annie reports.

Welcome to Afternoon Energy. I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino. Send your thoughts, news and tips to ktamborrino@politico.com, mdaily@politico.com and njuliano@politico.com, and keep up with us on Twitter at [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@dailym1](https://twitter.com/dailym1), [@nickjuliano](https://twitter.com/nickjuliano), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

PARIS EXIT UNPOPULAR EXCEPT WITH TRUMP BASE: A Quinnipiac [survey](#) released today found that most voters disapprove of Trump's decision to exit the Paris climate agreement, although his GOP base supports the move. Overall, 62 percent of voters surveyed said they disapprove of the decision, while 32 percent approve, though 72 percent of Republicans agree with the president. Trump's approval rating hit a new low in the poll, falling to just 34 percent, while 57 percent of voters disapprove of his job performance, Madeline Conway [reports](#).

BLUE-STATE RED GOVERNORS FACE CLIMATE PRESSURE: Of the five Republican governors up for reelection next year in traditionally blue or blue-tinted states, two — Charlie Baker of Massachusetts and Phil Scott of Vermont — have already announced plans to join the U.S. Climate Alliance, a Democratic-led group of states pledging to uphold clean energy and carbon reduction commitments under the Paris agreement. That's enough to put a squeeze on some other governors: Spokespeople for Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan have already said he wouldn't have left the Paris Agreement, but Hogan is "still learning" about the Climate Alliance, a spokeswoman told [The Baltimore Sun](#). Democratic challengers have already begun pressuring him to join. Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner has also faced Democratic criticism, but has been mum on both Trump's pullout and whether he would join the Climate Alliance. New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu told the [Concord Monitor](#) his state would not join the pact. (h/t [Morning Score](#))

WSJ: OIL EXPORTS DOUBLE: The U.S. is expected to double the amount of oil it exports this year, reshaping the global market, The Wall Street Journal [reports](#). "The U.S. exported 1 million barrels of oil a day during some months so far this year — double the pace of 2016 — and is on track to average that amount for all of 2017," according to a WSJ analysis of data from the Energy Department and the International Trade Commission. While U.S. exports make up just 1 percent of global oil volumes, WSJ reports, "they are a new factor helping to tamp down prices and keep them rangebound between \$45 and \$55 a barrel. ... A major reason why U.S. exports are rising is that American crude has been selling at a discount of roughly \$2.50 a barrel to the international oil-price benchmark, Brent, for much of this year." Read more [here](#).

U.S. STILL NO. 1 OIL, GAS PRODUCER: In 2016, the U.S. remained the world's top producer of petroleum and natural gas hydrocarbons, the Energy Information Administration [reports](#) today. The U.S. has remained the leader for five straight years, despite production declines for both petroleum and natural gas relative to their 2015 levels, EIA found. Crude oil and lease condensate accounted for roughly 60 percent of total petroleum hydrocarbon production in 2016. Meanwhile, petroleum production fell by 300,000 barrels per day in 2016, as a result of relatively low oil prices. "With rapid growth in natural gas production through 2015 and a very mild 2015-2016 winter that reduced demand for natural gas as a heating fuel, average U.S. natural gas prices in 2016 were at their lowest level since 1999," EIA also reports. "Despite a modest recovery in prices later in the year, natural gas production decreased by 2.3 billion cubic feet per day in 2016."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS, ETHANOL INTERESTS: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will hold a hearing on Sen. [Deb Fischer](#)'s bill to allow year-round sale of 15 percent ethanol fuel on June 14, at 10 a.m., a committee spokesman told AE. The hearing marks the first part of a deal struck between Fischer and committee Chairman [John Barrasso](#) (R-Wyo.) in exchange for corn-state Republicans' support for a failed resolution to kill an Obama-era methane rule.

TRUMP STEPS INTO QATAR DISPUTE: Trump spoke to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani today amid a diplomatic falling-out in the energy-rich region over accusations that the Qatari government supported terrorist organizations. Trump emphasized the importance of reconciliation, saying a strong United States-Gulf Cooperation Council relationship is critical to fighting terrorism and maintaining regional stability, according to the White House. The president also offered to host Qatar and other disputing nations in Washington if it would help resolve their differences. More [here](#).

KNOW YOUR MEME: Former Gov. of Alaska and one-time VP pick Sarah Palin took to Facebook to praise Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate pact and warn readers: "Don't be Fooled! The Paris Climate Accord is a SCAM." But the accompanying image of the post did not feature lobbyists or others she's bashed. Instead, it depicted a group highly conservative Republican members of the Florida House of Representatives on the chamber floor — arguably those least likely to support either the idea of man-made climate change or the Paris accord. POLITICO Florida's Marc Caputo has more [here](#).

FLORIDA LAWMAKER LOBBIES FOR EVERGLADES: Following dinner at the White House on Tuesday night, Florida Republican [Francis Rooney](#) says he urged Trump to provide funding for restoring the Everglades and was "encouraged" by the president's response, POLITICO Florida's Sergio Bustos [reports](#). "Despite Trump's assurances to Rooney, the president's proposed fiscal 2018 budget released last month comes up short on Everglades

restoration, environmentalists [say](#). The budget requests \$131 million for Everglades restoration work, including \$83 million for 68 projects authorized under the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program. Environmentalists say \$245 million is needed," Sergio writes.

MAIL CALL — IN SUPPORT OF MONUMENTS REVIEW: A coalition including American Energy Alliance, Eagle Forum and Heritage Action for America penned a letter to the president last week applauding his announced review of national monuments. The groups write the action is "welcome news for locals whose voices have been drowned out by environmental groups, corporate interests and other special interests. Your historic executive order sets the stage for a transformation of the Antiquities Act from an executive bludgeon into the tool of preservation its authors intended." Read the letter [here](#).

QUICK HITS:

- Biden: Trump at odds with most Americans on climate change, [ABC News](#).
- Pruitt says coal losses make the grid vulnerable. Not really, [E&E News](#).
- 'Malama Honua,' Hawaii says, as it becomes first state to pass laws supporting Paris accord, [The Washington Post](#).
- France vows to go beyond Paris climate commitments, [Reuters](#).

WIDE WORLD OF POLITICS:

- Democrats [zero in on voters](#) who spurned them
- [Fresh from Europe](#), Trump still resists domestic travel
- 5 things to know about Trump's [FBI pick Christopher Wray](#)

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Trump touts inland waterways, though his budget would slash funding [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 06/07/2017 02:24 PM EDT

President Donald Trump decried the state of America's infrastructure, particularly its crumbling system of locks and dams, during a speech in Cincinnati this afternoon, even though his own budget blueprint calls for deep funding cuts to the same programs.

Speaking on the banks of the Ohio River with a barge filled with West Virginia coal floating behind him, Trump argued that the inland waterways system is vital to the country's energy, agricultural and manufacturing sectors, but has suffered from lack of investment.

"These critical corridors of commerce depend on a dilapidated system of locks and dams that is more than half a century old and their condition ... is in very, very bad shape. It continues to

decay," Trump said, pointing to an \$8.7 billion maintenance backlog.

But Trump's budget proposal for fiscal 2018 would cut the Army Corps of Engineers' construction account by more than 50 percent, with only enough funding to work on a single new lock and dam project on the system.

The barge industry successfully lobbied to have its diesel fuel tax raised in 2014 in order to collect more money to invest in new and major rehabilitation projects, whose costs are split with the federal government. But the Trump administration's budget proposal would leave this extra money sitting in a trust fund rather than putting it to use on the types of projects Trump touted in his speech today.

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Trump approval rating hits new low in Quinnipiac poll [Back](#)

By Madeline Conway | 06/07/2017 02:05 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's approval rating hit another low in Quinnipiac University's poll, which found this week that 34 percent of voters approve of his job performance and 57 percent disapprove.

Trump's previous low in the Quinnipiac survey was a 35 percent positive and 57 percent negative rating, registered on April 4.

The university's most recent poll, released Wednesday and conducted from May 31 to June 6, also found that a large majority of respondents — 68 percent — believe that the president is "not level-headed" (29 percent say he is). Even among members of his own party, this holds true: 64 percent of Republicans say Trump is not level-headed, while 32 percent think he is.

Majorities of respondents similarly told Quinnipiac that Trump is not honest; does not have good leadership skills; does not care about average Americans; and does not share their values. Sixty-two percent described him as a strong person and 57 percent said he is intelligent.

Ahead of the highly anticipated testimony of James Comey, the former FBI director Trump fired, the survey also found that most voters are skeptical of the president's relationship with Russia.

Thirty-one percent of respondents said they believe that Trump did something illegal with Russia, 29 percent think he is guilty of unethical but not illegal behavior, and 32 percent said he did not do anything wrong. A bit more, 40 percent, think advisers on the Trump campaign did something illegal with Russia.

The poll found that 54 percent of voters believe that Trump is too friendly with the Kremlin, which the U.S. intelligence community says carried out cyberattacks targeting Democrats during the presidential campaign last year in an attempt to help Trump's standing in the race.

The White House has repeatedly denied that Trump or his associates colluded with Russian hackers, a question that is the subject of ongoing federal investigation. Comey was overseeing the FBI's investigation into the matter until Trump fired him.

Seventy-three percent of respondents said they approve of Robert Mueller being named special counsel to oversee the Russia investigation, while 15 percent disapprove.

On policy, the Quinnipiac survey found that most voters disapprove of Trump's decision to exit the Paris Climate Agreement, an international pact to combat climate change and decrease carbon emissions. Sixty-two percent of voters surveyed said they disapprove of the decision, while 32 percent approve, though 72 percent of Republicans agree with the president.

The poll had a sample size of 1,361 and a margin of error of 3.2 percent.

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Trump speaks to Qatar's emir, offers to help resolve regional conflict [Back](#)

By Jake Lahut | 06/07/2017 02:37 PM EDT

President Donald Trump spoke to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani on Wednesday amid a diplomatic falling-out in the region over accusations the Qatari government supported terrorist organizations.

"The President emphasized the importance of all countries in the region working together to prevent the financing of terrorist organizations and stop the promotion of extremist ideology," the White House said in a statement.

Trump emphasized the importance of reconciliation, saying a strong United States-Gulf Cooperation Council relationship is critical to fighting terrorism and maintaining regional stability.

Trump also offered to host Qatar and other disputing nations in Washington if it would help resolve their differences, the White House said.

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Palin accidentally bashes Florida Republicans in Paris accord meme [Back](#)

By Marc Caputo | 06/07/2017 11:01 AM EDT

Sarah Palin took a strong stand in support of President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from a global warming agreement, warning her Facebook readers with a meme that intoned, "Don't be Fooled! The Paris Climate Accord is a SCAM."

However, the picture the former Alaska governor and Republican vice presidential nominee used — featuring well-dressed people celebrating — was pure fake news. It doesn't really feature the "lobbyists" and others she bashed.

Instead, it depicts a group unlikely to support either the idea of man-made climate change or the Paris accord: highly conservative Republican members of the Florida House of Representatives on the chamber floor.

Palin deleted the post after Politico reported her error.

Florida Republicans and insiders couldn't stop mocking and laughing at Palin's error.

"I'm appalled. ... As the owner of a publishing company, I find it appalling that she would use a low-res picture like this when a high-res picture is readily available," joked state Rep. Scott Plakon, who's in the picture standing with his hands together as he claps with joy.

Plakon said, "I was almost in tears with laughter" that Palin got it so wrong with her 9:37 a.m. Tuesday post — which was shared nearly 8,000 times and generated hundreds of comments before it was deleted. "I'm not sure what she's saying. Are we cheering for Paris or against it? I think she's saying we're celebrating Paris."

To be clear, Plakon believes the idea of man-made climate change is a "false religion" and that the Paris accord is a "bad deal" for the United States. He supported Trump's withdrawal from the voluntary agreement last week.

Plakon tracked down the photo to a Florida House Web page from former Republican Rep. Chris Dorworth that shows it was taken May 7, 2011, when the Florida House celebrated outmaneuvering the more moderate Senate.

"Paris climate accord? I thought you said 'Honda Accord. Well, this is embarrassing," joked Dorworth, who in the photo is standing with both fists raised in celebration. "The science of Honda Accords is undisputed. Global warming ... not so much," he said via text message.

Asked whether he believes in man-made climate change or the Paris accord, Dorworth replied bluntly: "No and no."

When former Republican Rep. J.C. Planas saw the post, he had to comment on Palin's web page: "That is a picture of REPUBLICAN Florida Legislators. Hahahahahahaha!!!! You are such an idiot!!!"

Planas was not in the picture but promptly razed some of the former members who were. Unlike many of the former members in the photograph, Planas told Politico Florida that he does believe in man-made climate change but says he believes the United States should not strike deals that "completely sabotage our economy while Asian countries continue polluting."

The meme Palin shared, Planas said, "goes to show the stupidity of some people who will sacrifice facts in order to promote an idea of a fake global conspiracy. My party needs to wise up and get rid of these idiots."

Palin's meme closed with the line: "They pretend it's about fixing our environment... But it's REALLY about stealing Billions from the American people and giving it to foreign

companies, countries and lobbyists!"

Former House Speaker Will Weatherford, who led his chamber's redistricting committee in 2011 and is depicted in the photo, initially thought the picture commemorated an announcement that state House redistricting maps passed constitutional muster.

Asked whether he believes in man-made climate change and the Paris accord, Weatherford demurred: "I am a private citizen now. I don't have to answer those binary questions anymore ... when I run again, you can ask me then."

Another Republican in the photograph, former Rep. Seth McKeel, said via text Wednesday that he "assumed it was some idiot who found a random pic. Are they really suggesting Will and I took some vote on the Paris Climate Accord?"

McKeel said he was notified of Palin's post when someone sent him a picture of it with a comment that sums up the reaction of insiders: "'High quality' work by Palin's comms team. It's like they decided to grab a random picture of politicians off Google with no context to make their point. All of which are Republicans and all of which are members (or former members) of the Florida House and didn't vote on the issue. But hey, it fits the narrative."

McKeel declined to say whether he believes in climate change and the Paris accord.

"I'm not jumping into that. My take is it sounds like Sarah Palin needs some more help using Google Images."

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Democrats zero in on voters who spurned them [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard | 06/07/2017 01:25 PM EDT

Stung by a slew of late-breaking defeats in recent governors races, Democrats believe they've come up with a new turnout model that will better predict how those contests will break in the final days.

The Democratic Governors Association on Tuesday convened its polling, analytics and media consultants in downtown Washington to unveil a model designed to give the party better intelligence about where, and whom, to target in the closing days of an election. The idea is to bolster campaigns' understanding of undecided voters, but also to identify which voters might switch from one party to the other at the ballot box.

It's the latest step in the party's effort to [revamp their polling operations](#) following now-President Donald Trump's upset victory last fall. There's a sense of urgency attached to the project: The 38 governorships up in 2017 and 2018 may represent the [party's best shot](#) at returning to power before the 2020 presidential election.

"This kind of redefines, at some level, undecided voters — and the difference between an undecided and a persuadable voter. Just because someone says they're undecided in a poll

doesn't mean they're persuadable," said DGA Political Director Corey Platt. "And just because someone says they're with you doesn't mean they're not persuadable. And so this is a better tactical tool to help identify who the people are that we need to persuade at the end."

Republicans now control 33 of the nation's 50 governorships — the most since 1922 — in large part because GOP underdogs eked out victories over the past four cycles against Democratic favorites in a number of states, despite polling that led Democrats to believe they were headed to victory. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan and Maine Gov. Paul LePage are among those who trailed in many of the polls before the 2014 election, but ultimately prevailed.

The harshest blow came the year after, when most observers expected Democrat Jack Conway to win the off-year race in Kentucky. But Republican Matt Bevin defied the polls and defeated Conway easily.

Last year, Democrats similarly fell short in Indiana and Missouri, even though their pre-election surveys suggested each race was winnable. Similarly, exit poll data indicates late-deciding voters broke sharply for Trump over Hillary Clinton in the three northern states that provided Trump with his Electoral College majority: Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

As part of a pre-planned effort, Democratic pollster Jeffrey Pollock, president of Global Strategy Group in New York, led a project to re-contact voters in Indiana and Missouri — along with two states where Democrats won the governor's race, Montana and West Virginia — to figure out what happened at the gubernatorial level in 2016.

The research, shared with POLITICO, suggests that while each state was different, Republicans won undecided voters in Indiana and Missouri by margins that likely proved decisive in those close races.

In Indiana, the research shows, half of voters who said they were undecided before the election said they voted for now-GOP Gov. Eric Holcomb, compared to only 28 percent for Democrat John Gregg. Moreover, 10 percent of voters supporting Gregg before the election said they ended up voting for Holcomb, while only 6 percent of Holcomb voters backed Gregg.

The late break in Missouri was even more stark. Republican Eric Greitens won 55 percent of undecided and third-party voters, according to the analysis, while Democrat Chris Koster won only 21 percent of these voters.

"Missouri has the greatest polling error of any state in the country," Pollock said.

While part of that error was systemic — the polls overestimated Koster's "support across the state, but particularly in places like Springfield," Pollock said — that was dwarfed by the undecided who broke toward Greitens by wide margins.

But Pollock — who said his analysis factored in poll respondents' tendency to overstate their support for the actual winner — also noted that the Democratic candidates in Montana and West Virginia held the line among late-deciding voters.

The model the DGA hopes to implement uses other polling, demographic and commercial data to identify the universe of truly persuadable voters — the specifics of which the DGA and

Pollock say are proprietary.

"It's not just the undecideds. It's also that there's a bunch of people who may very well switch," Pollock said. "Seventy or 80 percent of voters aren't switching. But that 20 percent — who are they?"

For now, the DGA is hopeful that party operatives working on gubernatorial races will embrace this new model, though there's no guarantee it will gain widespread acceptance.

"This isn't about the DGA imposing particular standards," said Elisabeth Pearson, the DGA's executive director. "Everybody, especially after 2016, is looking for ways that we can improve some things, change some things. ... I think it's going to be great."

While the new approach helps identify persuadable voters, it doesn't in and of itself solve Democrats' most significant problem: From last year's presidential race back to the 2014 midterms, more late-breaking elections broke toward Republicans.

"I think there's no question that there's been a Democratic headwind that we have had to fight against," said Pollock. "That's true on the governors' race level, that's true in Senate races. That's why we are where we are. And that's why national politics do matter."

But, Pollock added, Trump's current unpopularity could flip the script for the party if it holds — and make Democrats the beneficiaries of any late movement.

"What I fear, though ... is that we would overlearn that example and go into what looks to be right now a tremendous potential year thanks to Donald Trump and the backlash [against him]," Pollock said. "And, all of a sudden, we would have overlearned all the wrong lessons."

Pollock hopes the new model will help the party solve a problem that has dogged it for the past three year -- one that he knows all too well.

"[Fellow Democratic pollster] Fred Yang and I sat in this room [last year] and told a whole bunch of people, 'That's what happened in 2015 in Jack Conway's race,'" Pollock said Tuesday in an interview at DGA headquarters, citing the late movement toward Republicans in the Kentucky race.

"And it felt like bulls---. Even as I was presenting it: It's like, this all feels like a massive cover-up for the pollsters. To be like, 'No, no, no, no. We swear all these people moved.' And yet, that's actually exactly what happened in these [2016 governors races], and it happens to be what happened in the presidential."

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Fresh from Europe, Trump still resists domestic travel [Back](#)

By Tara Palmeri | 06/07/2017 11:25 AM EDT

President Donald Trump heads to Cincinnati on the first of what his staff hopes will be a series

of visits across the country to sell his legislative agenda — but that will mean convincing their boss to suffer through a night in a bed other than his own.

Aside from a recent international trip, Trump hasn't spent the night anywhere except the White House or his resorts in Florida and Bedminster, New Jersey. He hasn't been west of the Mississippi since just before his election in November, or taken a domestic flight longer than three hours.

In Cincinnati, Trump will promote his infrastructure plan, then return to Washington in time for the evening news.

But some say Trump is missing opportunities that would make his legislative unveilings more compelling, like his announcement on Monday in the East Room of the White House of a plan to privatize the Federal Aviation Administration.

"Why do the FAA event on campus?" asked Republican strategist Alex Conant, who worked in the communications office for President George W. Bush. "He could have gone on Air Force One to any airport in the country and would have had a more appropriate backdrop that would have got more support for the initiative."

But despite the urge to get the president out talking to his base to build a mandate for his agenda — which so far includes an unpopular health care plan, tax reform and infrastructure — aides say they know not to push too hard against their boss, who feels energized when he's in familiar settings socializing with friends.

"Trump likes to be able to sleep in his bed, keep an eye on the news and solicit feedback from his friends and confidants, whether that's at the White House, Mar-a-Lago or Bedminster," said the White House aide.

"It's not a point of frequent of discussion, it's just a fact. It's a reality of what we've done to this point," the aide added.

"The president is absolutely the best advocate for the legislative agenda and it would be irresponsible for the staff not to plan smart travel for the president of the United States," said White House deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "We all work to make things as effective and efficient as possible whether the president is working from the White House or on the road."

Like Trump, Bush would often return to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, where he spent 490 days of his two terms. The Secret Service installed a helipad at Ronald Reagan's ranch in California so that he could easily return home.

Bush, coming off the contentious 2000 election and looking to build support for his tax plan, had flown to 26 states in his first 100 days to rally public support behind him. President Barack Obama had held 15 events and one fundraiser, and visited 12 countries, at this point in his first year.

During the campaign, Trump made a point of always traveling back to his home base at Trump Tower in New York City. One notable exception: the night he spent at a Holiday Inn in Iowa just before the 2016 caucuses.

After the third presidential debate in Las Vegas, Trump insisted on flying back to Trump

Tower.

Trump has held 20 rallies and events since his inauguration. Four of those events were located near one of his Trump properties in New Jersey and Florida, where he spent the night.

Before the foreign trip, Trump complained to staff about how much detests sleeping on Air Force One, which includes two twin beds that can convert into couches. Aides responded by consolidating visits to five countries in the Middle East and Europe during the president's nine-day tour last month.

But once they get him out of the White House, aides say, Trump gets more energized. "He's still our most powerful communications tool," said the aide. "Nothing we could ever manufacture could get as much attention as Donald Trump in front of microphone."

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5 things to know about Trump's FBI pick Christopher Wray [Back](#)

By Josh Gerstein | 06/07/2017 09:53 AM EDT

After a tumultuous search process, President Donald Trump said Wednesday he plans to nominate former senior Justice Department official Christopher Wray to be the next director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assuming Wray, 50, wins Senate confirmation, he would fill the vacancy created by Trump's abrupt and earthshaking firing of James Comey last month.

Here are five things to know about Wray:

1. He was Christie's lawyer in the Bridgegate scandal

Wray's inside track for the job can likely be traced to his work for New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was a key supporter of Trump during last year's campaign and remains in close touch with the president. As a criminal defense lawyer in private practice, Wray represented Christie in the federal investigation into efforts by Christie's allies to exact political retribution on a mayor by slowing traffic across a critical bridge.

Christie has claimed he had no knowledge of the alleged scheme, but three Christie aides or allies were convicted for their involvement.

With Wray's assistance, Christie has faced no charges in Bridgegate. Wray is said to have possession of a cellphone Christie used to text with others during a key state hearing into Bridgegate. The phone was studied during a probe Christie commissioned into the affair but went missing for a time before it was revealed that Wray had it.

2. Wray was a top DOJ official after 9/11

Wray took a job at Justice Department headquarters in May 2001, working as an aide to Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson. Wray was later promoted to the principal deputy post in that office.

Due to that timing, Wray was deeply involved in a variety of issues related to the Bush administration's response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. He could face questioning at his confirmation hearing about some of the more controversial tactics used during that period, such as widespread detention of foreigners from majority-Muslim countries.

"We have never, as you know, experienced anything as savage and cowardly as the attack that occurred on Sept. 11, and we must do everything within our power, within the Constitution and the law, to make sure it never happens again," Wray said at a 2003 Senate hearing on his elevation to assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

In that post, Wray also got broad experience overseeing major criminal investigations and prosecutions, such as the Justice Department's Enron Task Force, which pursued fraud at the failed energy-trading giant.

A former U.S. attorney in Northern Virginia, Neil MacBride, called Wray a "great pick" for the FBI job and said he brings "deep law enforcement and prosecutorial background, great judgment [and] even temperament."

"I've known him and worked with him for two decades, in both his private- and public-sector stints, know he has enormous respect for the Justice Department and believe he will bring the independence and strength needed in this challenging environment," MacBride said.

Thompson, who brought Wray to Washington and also battled with him as a private defense lawyer, said Wray will serve the DOJ and FBI well in the new role. "I've worked with Chris for a number of years and always had complete confidence in him. He simply doesn't make mistakes," Thompson said.

3. He has ties to a Mueller probe aide

One of the leaders of the Enron Task Force, Andrew Weissmann, is now a top deputy to Robert Mueller, the special prosecutor recently named to oversee the ongoing probes into potential ties between the Trump campaign and Russia.

As head of the FBI, Wray will likely have to interact with Mueller's operation, which is expected to lean heavily on the investigative work the bureau has already done.

Another question Wray could face at his hearing is whether, as a Trump appointee, he would plan to be involved in the investigation or cede his role to a career FBI official.

4. He is a double Yale grad

Wray attended Yale University and Yale Law School, where he served as a research assistant to a well-known expert on law and religion: Professor Stephen Carter.

"We will excuse him for attending Yale University for both his undergraduate studies and his legal education, but he saw the light and came back to Georgia," then-Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.) quipped about Wray at his 2003 confirmation hearing. (Though Wray is treated as a Georgian, official records show he was born in New York City.)

Before returning to Georgia after law school, Wray clerked for Judge Michael Luttig, a prominent conservative on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Wray then worked for four years at King & Spalding, his current firm, before joining the U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta as a prosecutor in 1997. He handled drug, gun, counterfeit money and corruption cases, including the prosecution of a prominent investment banker and the city of Atlanta's chief investment officer. Both were convicted on numerous counts.

Wray also prosecuted a string of church fires that caused alarm across much of the South. The defendant, who called himself a "missionary of Lucifer," pleaded guilty to arson but pursued an appeal, which was ultimately unsuccessful.






5. Wray hails from a family of lawyers

"This is a young man who has the law in his blood. His father, his uncle, his grandfather and his grandmother were all lawyers," then-Sen. Zell Miller (D-Ga.) said at the 2003 hearing.

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