

# Trump chooses RFK Jr. as health secretary

JILL COLVIN AND AMANDA SEITZ  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — President-elect Donald Trump says he will nominate anti-vaccine activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, putting him in charge of a massive agency that oversees everything from drug, vaccine and food safety to medical research and the social safety net programs Medicare and Medicaid.

“For too long, Americans have been crushed by the industrial food complex and drug companies who have engaged in deception, misinformation, and disinformation when it comes to Public Health,” Trump said in a post on his Truth Social site announcing the appointment. Kennedy, he said, would “Make America Great and Healthy Again!”

Trump also announced Doug Collins, a former congressman from Georgia, is his choice to run the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Collins is a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force Reserve Command. The Republican served in Congress from 2013 to 2021, and he helped defend Trump during his first impeachment process.

Kennedy, a former Democrat who ran as an independent in this year's presidential race, abandoned his bid after striking a deal to give Trump his endorsement with a promise to have a role in health policy in the administration.

He and Trump since became good friends, with Kennedy frequently receiving loud applause at Trump's rallies.

The expected appointment was



Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., speaks Sept. 27 before Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump at a campaign event in Walker, Mich.

first reported by Politico Thursday.

A longtime vaccine skeptic, Kennedy is an attorney who has built a loyal following over several decades of people who admire his lawsuits against major pesticide and pharmaceutical companies. He has pushed for tighter regulations around the ingredients in foods.

With the Trump campaign, he worked to shore up support among young mothers in particular, with his message of making food healthier in the U.S., promising to model regulations imposed in Europe.

In a nod to Trump's original campaign slogan, he named the effort “Make America Healthy Again.”

It remains unclear how that will square with Trump's history of deregulation of big industries, including food. Trump pushed for fewer inspections of the meat industry, for example.

Kennedy's stance on vaccines also made him a controversial figure among Democrats and some Republicans, raising questions about his ability to get confirmed, even in a GOP-controlled Senate.

Kennedy espouses misinformation around the safety of vaccines, including pushing a totally discredited theory that childhood vaccines cause autism.

He also says he would recommend removing fluoride from drinking water. The addition of fluoride in the 20th century is cited as leading to improved dental health.

HHS has more than 80,000 employees across the country. It houses the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Medi-

care and Medicaid programs and the National Institutes of Health.

Kennedy's anti-vaccine non-profit group, Children's Health Defense, has a lawsuit pending against a number of news organizations, among them The Associated Press, accusing them of violating antitrust laws by taking action to identify misinformation, including about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines.

Kennedy took leave from the group when he announced his run for president but is listed as one of its attorneys in the lawsuit.

Meanwhile, Republicans won enough seats late Wednesday to control the U.S. House, completing the party's sweep into power and securing their hold on U.S. government alongside Trump.

A House Republican win in Arizona, alongside another in slow-counting California earlier Wednesday, gave the GOP the 218 House victories that make up the majority. Republicans also gained control of the Senate from Democrats this week.

With thin majorities, Republican leaders envision a mandate to upend the federal government and swiftly implement Trump's vision for the country.

The incoming president promises to carry out the country's largest-ever deportation operation, extend tax breaks, punish his political enemies, seize control of the federal government's most powerful tools and reshape the U.S. economy. The GOP election victories ensure that Congress will be onboard for that agenda, and Democrats will be almost powerless to check it.

## Restoring voting rights topic of Friday session

Virginia Organizing will hold a Restoration of Rights Forum on Friday, Nov. 15, from 7-8:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fredericksburg, at 25 Chalice Circle.

The event is open to the public and sponsored by the Fredericksburg Chapter of Virginia Organizing, UUFF and the Spotsylvania chapter of the NAACP.

The group will discuss felony disenfranchisement, which it defines as the practice of denying formerly incarcerated people their right to vote. Currently, Virginia permanently disenfranchises those with felony convictions, and the governor only intervenes on a case-by-case basis to restore rights.

The process currently used by Gov. Glenn Youngkin differs from that of two Virginia governors, who instituted automatic restoration of rights after people completed their sentences, according to a news release.

At the forum, Del. Joshua Cole will advocate for amending Virginia's Constitution to allow the automatic restoration of voting rights after incarceration. He will explain the legis-

lative process required and how the public can get involved. Panelist Juanita Shanks, founder of Failsafe-ERA which works with families of incarcerated and returning citizens, will address the value of restoring voting rights.

Virginia Organizing leaders Jen Rhame and Duane Edwards will share their personal journeys after felony convictions.

Refreshments will be served.

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## Stafford seeks public's help in hit-and-run case

KEITH EPPS  
The Free Lance-Star

Stafford authorities are seeking the public's help in identifying the hit-and-run driver who struck and seriously injured two pedestrians earlier this month in the county.

Sheriff's spokesman Ryan Wilbur said two men, ages 44 and 42, were pushing a shopping cart at the intersection of Mine Road and Greenspring Drive late Nov. 1 when they were struck by a speeding black sedan.

One man was taken to a local hospital to be treated for serious injuries, police said, while the other was flown to receive treatment for life-threatening injuries. Both victims are stable now and are expected to recover. Police credited bystanders and emergency workers for providing essential care at the scene.

Wilbur said that based on evidence recovered at the scene, the suspect vehicle is believed to be a 2024 Volkswagen GTI. It was last seen

fleeing on Garrisonville Road (State Route 610), and likely has extensive front and passenger side damage, including a broken passenger side window.

Anyone who was in that area at the time and has dash cam footage is asked to check it for a possible sighting. Anyone with information is asked to call Deputy S.C. Martin at 540/658-4400.

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## Wanted Portsmouth man arrested at Stafford hotel

KEITH EPPS  
The Free Lance-Star

A man who was already wanted by two law enforcement agencies was arrested in Stafford County on Wednesday after police learned about his search for cocaine.

Sheriff's Maj. Shawn Kimmitz said deputies went to the Holiday Inn at 20 Sanford Drive about 9:15 a.m. for a reported disturbance. Staff reported that a guest was having trouble paying for his room and also asked “where one could get cocaine.”

Kimmitz said the man became argumentative with deputies and provided a phony identification. Police said the person he claimed to be does not have the facial tattoos displayed by the suspect.

After determining who the man really was, deputies learned that he was wanted by the U.S. Marshals Service and by Portsmouth police on a child neglect charge. During his ride to the Rappahannock Regional Jail, police said, the suspect discarded a

suspected illegal drug in the back of Deputy N.D. Fonseca's cruiser.

Ahmaud Brown, 30, of Portsmouth, is charged in Stafford with possession of illegal drugs and providing a false identity to law enforcement. He was also served his outstanding warrants.

Brown is being held under no bond and is awaiting pickup by the Marshals Service.

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## Man accused of supporting ISIS charged

HOUSTON (AP) — A Texas man charged with trying to provide material support to the Islamic State group and planning violent attacks in Houston appeared in federal court Thursday.

Anas Said is accused of offering his home as a safe sanctuary for members of ISIS and saying he wants to

take part in a terrorist attack like 9/11, according to court records. Federal prosecutors allege Said had spent time planning and discussing committing attacks in Houston, where he lived, and had used the internet to research how to make explosives and use cellphones as remote detonators.

“He has created videos extolling the ‘virtue’ of ISIS, the violence and death brought by ISIS, and the need for the terror perpetrated by ISIS to continue,” according to court documents. “He is dedicated to his mission to provide material support to ISIS in whatever form that may take.”

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