



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 5, 2016

Donald Trump Officially Names Ben Carson as Head of HUD

As expected, on Monday President-elect Donald Trump [nominated](#) retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson to head the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), stating:

I am thrilled to nominate Dr. Ben Carson as our next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ben Carson has a brilliant mind and is passionate about strengthening communities and families within those communities.



Armstrong Williams, a Carson confidant, said the nomination is a perfect fit for the nominee: “HUD is a place that has an impact on something that Dr. Carson cares tremendously about: the inner city and urban America. Dr. Carson really has a passion for those issues where [he] could really make a difference.”

Others weren’t so “thrilled” with the nomination. Some complained that it was a play to the African-American community. Others grouched that Carson wasn’t a career politician, suggesting that running a \$30-billion agency with 8,500 employees might just be a little beyond his capabilities.

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Diane Yentel, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a “social justice” organizer, suggested that Trump could have found someone better:

With many qualified Republicans to choose from, with deep knowledge of and commitment to affordable housing solutions for the poorest families ... Dr. Carson’s nomination ... is surprising and concerning.

Amy Lei, director at the left-leaning Brookings Institution was even less charitable, suggesting that only a career politician could successfully take on HUD:

There’s a lot of anxiety now ... [the new secretary] is going to have to deal with ... the future of high-poverty neighborhoods. He has a powerful personal story that could connect him with a lot of families that rely on HUD assistance [but] he just needs to use that personal story to listen and empathize and really learn about the latest innovations in the field.

After all, previous HUD secretaries were politicians: George Romney, who ran the agency under President Nixon, was a governor; Jack Kemp, who headed up HUD under George Bush, was a congressman; Henry Cisneros, who served as HUD head under Bill Clinton, was a mayor, as was the present HUD secretary, Julian Castro.

A former mayor of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter, was even less forgiving:

As brilliant as folks have said that Dr. Carson is from a neurosurgery standpoint, creating fair



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housing, promoting economic development and having people living in prosperous communities is a little different than operating on someone's brain. I do not know how that translates into being HUD secretary.

Carson isn't a career politician and brings into the position certain views contrary to present expectations. On the campaign trail he told a TV interviewer that in his view, "poverty is really more of a choice than anything else" — anathema to those who think poverty is due to racism and lack of opportunity which can be fixed by more government. Carson once wrote that he considers fair housing policy as a form of "social engineering":

These government-engineered attempts to legislate racial equality create consequences that often make matters worse. There are reasonable ways to use housing policy to enhance the opportunities available to lower-income citizens, but based on the history of failed socialist experiments in this country, entrusting the government to get it right can prove downright dangerous.

He isn't likely to come anywhere close to achieving Trump's grand aspirations voiced during his campaign. Trump often said, "We're going to work with the African American community and we're going to solve the problem of the inner city."

What's more likely to happen is that Dr. Carson could be successful in overturning one of the more recent expansions of the agency's unconstitutional mandate: the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule.

That rule requires those cities and towns receiving HUD taxpayer dollars not only to treat people fairly but to institute rules by which "unfair" housing practices in their communities will be addressed *proactively*. To "aid" those efforts, communities receiving HUD funds must publicly present plans on how they will eliminate discrimination and segregation, likely through building lower-income housing projects in middle- and upper-income neighborhoods. This, it will be remembered, caused the mayor of Castle Rock, Colorado, to forgo the offer of HUD funds, considering the rule to be a federal intrusion into local sovereignty.

Other than that, Dr. Carson is likely to have his hands full running a 50-year-old agency, filled with some 8,500 civil servants whom he couldn't fire if he wanted to, handling responsibilities related to the Section 8 housing voucher program and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), keeping an eye on Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Ginnie Mae, and enforcing federal laws against discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and family status.

Photo of Ben Carson: Gage Skidmore

An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.

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