

Trump Taps Scott Turner for Secretary of Housing

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President-elect Donald Trump announced late last week that Scott Turner is his nominee for secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Turner, a former Texas lawmaker and a one-time professional football player, was executive director of the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council during the first Trump administration. He is currently chief visionary officer of JPI, a Dallas-based multifamily housing developer.

Len Wolfson, who briefly served as FHA acting commissioner in the first Trump HUD, said Turner's energy would bring a much-needed jolt of adrenaline to HUD.

Wolfson said Turner's highest priority on taking office would likely be to find a deputy secretary with housing and managerial experience to manage day-to-day operations at HUD.

Wolfson also expects Turner to bring most of the HUD staff back to the office rather than letting them work from home.

The incoming Trump administration has stated that it intends to require federal workers to return to office five days a week.

Turner, during his stint in the revitalization council, worked closely with then-HUD Secretary Ben Carson on the agency's opportunity zone programs.

Brian Montgomery, former HUD deputy secretary and former FHA commissioner, said Turner is passionate about lifting up the most underserved communities. Montgomery described the HUD nominee as a man of action.

Rep. Tim Scott, R-SC, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, said the new committee next year will work quickly to consider Turner's nomination. Scott is expected to chair the committee in the next Congress.

Ted Tozer, former Ginnie Mae president, said the nominees for the top posts at FHA and Ginnie will have more of an impact on the mortgage finance industry than a HUD secretary will.

He suggested the Trump administration work to maintain some continuity at FHA. Tozer noted that FHA Commissioner Julia Gordon has a few policy items underway that might not be completed by Jan. 20. He said the items aren't controversial but could have a significant impact on the success of nonbank mortgage lenders.

Industry Welcomes Turner's Nomination

Stockton Williams, executive director of the National Council of State Housing Agencies, said Turner's nomination "means the Cabinet will have a strong voice for economic development and opportunity for communities that have been left behind."

He added that state housing finance agencies look forward to working with Turner to make housing more affordable for homebuyers, owners and renters.

Officials of the Mortgage Bankers Association, the Community Home Lenders of America and the National Association of Home Builders separately said they were looking forward to working with new HUD leadership on boosting affordable housing.

Seth Appleton, president of U.S. Mortgage Insurers, said Turner's leadership roles in housing, community development, nonprofit and public service "prepare him well for this important role."

Tim Rood, CEO of Impact Capitol and former head of government and industry relations for SitusAMC, said Turner's "work on opportunity zones and community revitalization demonstrates a practical understanding of how to leverage public-private partnerships to drive positive change in underserved areas."