



Top stories



'Alternat
Trump t
in...



Melania
New Yo

Trump educa

ainted by Dems as unqualified












By Dan Merica, CNN

Updated 5:06 PM ET, V



Advertisement



-   02:31  Zinke: Zero tolerance for sexual harassment
-   02:24 Cabinet picks break with Trump on issues
-   02:53 RECAP: Rex Tillerson confirmation hearing
-   02:32 Tillerson avoids calling Putin war criminal
-   00:59 Tillerson: I talked Russ Trump

Washington (CNN) — Democratic senators hammered [Betsy DeVos](#), President-elect Donald Trump's pick to lead the Education Department, during Tuesday's confirmation hearing, claiming she is not qualified to lead the nation's education system.

There were also tense exchanges, like when DeVos agreed that Trump described sexual assault in a [leaked hot mic video from a 2005 entertainment show](#). In another surprising moment, a discussion of guns in schools turned on [grizzly bears](#).

As to policy, DeVos stood firm in her long held beliefs that parents -- not the government --

should be able to choose where to send children to school, pledging to push voucher programs should she be confirmed to lead the nation's education system. But the hearing largely hinged on her qualifications for the job.



Related Video: DeVos: Trump described sexual assault in tape 01:43

was "not that surprised."

DeVos has been a political heavyweight for decades, spending millions to advance conservative causes in her home state of Michigan and across the country. Much of her fortune had gone towards backing politicians and organizations that encourage voucher programs, allowing parents to send their children to private schools and helping them pay for it.



Related Article: Citing grizzlies, Betsy DeVos says states should determine school gun policies

When Sen. Al Franken of Minnesota asked DeVos whether she believed growth or proficiency was a better way to judge group of students, the Michigan Republican stumbled to answer and asked for clarification.

Franken pounced, suggesting that DeVos does not have the "breadth and depth of knowledge" to be education secretary.

"It surprises me that you don't know this issue," Franken said, later adding, biting, that actually he

"It's time to shift the debate from what the system thinks is best for kids to what moms and dads want, expect and deserve. Parents no longer believe that a one-size-fits-all model of learning meets the needs of every child," DeVos said, adding that she will push for more access to charter, home and religious schools.

DeVos said that she would be a "a strong advocate for great public schools," but would support "a parent's right to enroll their child in a high-quality alternative."

During a question and answer with Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, DeVos declined to answer whether she



Related Video: Warren challenges DeVos on personal experience 01:20

believed in applying the same standards to public, charter and private schools.

"I support accountability," DeVos said four times. When asked directly if she was declined to answer the question, DeVos simply said: "I support accountability."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, forced DeVos to admit that she has never led an organization akin to the Education Department, and has never used any of the financial aid products she will offer to

students as head of it.

"So you have no experience with college financial aid or management of higher education," Warren said.

DeVos was also pressed on civil rights laws dealing with students with disabilities, saying early in the hearing implementation should be left up to the states.

Sen. Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire circled back to DeVos near the end of the hearing, informing her the law was a federal statute.

"Federal law must be followed when federal dollars are in play," DeVos said.

"So were you unaware when I just asked you about the (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) that it was a federal law?" Hassan asked.

"I may have confused it," DeVos said.

Conflicts of interest

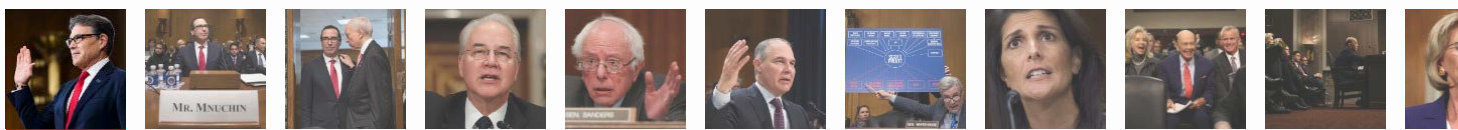
Democrats also keyed in on DeVos ties to education companies and possible accusations of conflict-of-interest between the potential education secretary and those she will seek to regulate.

Photos: Confirmation hearings for Trump's Cabinet

Along with Russia, Pompeo said other global threats include Iran's growing influence in the Middle East, ISIS grip over major urban areas, and the conflict in Syria.

17 of 33

Hide Caption [



These concerns have been exacerbated by the fact that DeVos' ethics paperwork, a requirement for anyone seeking a Cabinet post, has not yet been cleared by the Office of Government Ethics.

While the paperwork is not required to be approved before a hearing, as a Republican committee aide noted, it is required before the committee votes, meaning the delay in paperwork approval could delay DeVos' confirmation.

"I am extremely disappointed that we are moving forward with this hearing before receiving the proper paperwork from the Office of Government Ethics," Sen. Patty Murray, the committee's top

Democrat, said Tuesday.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also expressed his frustration with Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander said there would only be one round of senator questions. Schumer said she was controversial and Democrats need more than one five-minute period to ask her questions, adding that Alexander should schedule a second hearing and warned if he doesn't it could impact how Democrats deal with confirming other nominees.



Related Article: Betsy DeVos: 'Yes,' Trump's leaked tape comments describe sexual assault

Sexual assault

DeVos also did not commit to continuing the Obama administration's 2011 guidance on campus sexual assault, guidance that found schools would be in violation of Title IX and risk losing federal funds if they don't properly investigate sexual assault allegations.

"It would be premature for me to do that today," DeVos said.

DeVos, a mother of four, said the issue of campus sexual assault "is really piqued on this issue," but added that she would work to get read in on the issue once she gets to the Education Department.

The Michigan Republican did affirm that the actions Trump described on a leaked "Access Hollywood" 2005 tape -- where he described kissing and groping women without their consent -- constitutes sexual assault.

"Yes," DeVos said when asked by Murray about the tape that rocked the presidential campaign.

The comment marks a break from Trump's talking points at the time, which was largely to dismiss the comments as "locker room talk."

GOP donor

DeVos has been a prolific Republican donor for decades. She has given millions to groups that advocate for school privatization and voucher programs, including the American Federation for Children, a group she chaired from 2009 to 2016.

Like several of Trump's Cabinet picks, DeVos has tremendous wealth. Forbes estimates DeVos and her husband, Dick, are worth upwards of \$5 billion. She has also donated to at least four of the senators who heard her testimony on Tuesday.

Responding to a question from Sen. Bernie Sanders, DeVos said "collectively (it) is possible" her family has given around \$200 million to Republican causes over the years.

LGBT issues

DeVos' giving through a slew of family foundations was also an issue in regards to how she would handle LGBT issues as education secretary.

Franken pushed DeVos regarding donations to Focus on the Family, an organization that believes conversion therapy for LGBT. Franken directly asked DeVos whether she "still believes" in conversion therapy.

"I have never believed in that," DeVos said, adding, "I fully embrace equality."

DeVos and her family -- through three family foundations -- have given more than \$10 million to Focus on the Family, according to watchdog groups.

DeVos later said that senators were conflating donations she made and those made her mother's foundation.

"My mother makes the decisions for her foundation," she said.



Enter Your Name, Wait 14 Seconds, Brace Yourself

TruthFinder



He Made 21,078% Buying Amazon. Here's His New Pick

The Motley Fool



The 2017 IKEA Catalog Is Filled With Genius Ideas

IKEA



An L.A. Stylist Shows J.Crew How She Wears The Cropped Wide-Leg Pant

J.CREW



Why Not Having a List Shouldn't Keep You from Starting Email Marketing

Constant Contact Blogs



Everything You Need to Know About Earwax

WebMD

Paid Content

"Shark Tank Star's Brilliant Tip On Paying Off Mortgage *Bills.com*

How 2 Boston Grads Are Disrupting a \$19 Billion Industry *EverQuote*

The Best Midsize SUVs On The Market *Kelley Blue Book*

1 In 2 Americans Are Unaware of This Brilliant PC Trick *Web Life Advice*

More from CNN

Barrack on President Trump's first day



Steelers assistant coach arrested



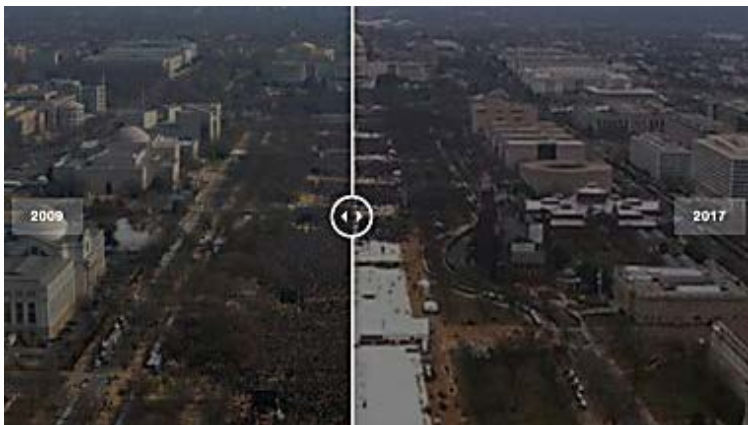
3 Texas men missing while duck hunting found dead

This powerful photo shows Obama's final White House goodbye

Recommended by Outbrain



These Dems won't attend Trump inauguration



Comparing Donald Trump and Barack Obama's inaugural crowd sizes



McCain, Graham say they will support Tillerson



Conway: Trump will not release tax returns



What the Trump administration has done so far

News and Buzz



Rapper photo a NCAA violation



News anchor quits to become a Lyft driver

Paid Content



No Couple at the Golden Globes Was Cuter than These Two



“Shark Tank” Star’s Brilliant Advice For Paying Off Your

More from CNN



The empty desk of Trump's White House



Ivanka Trump: I'm not first lady

Livingly



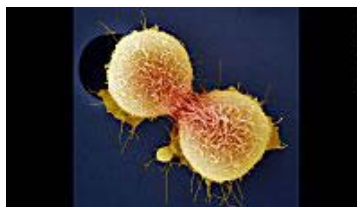
Check out 10 of Florida's award-winning beaches
Visit Florida

Mortgage
OneSmartPenny.com



We Tried HelloFresh: Here's How Much Easier It Was
Popdust

Recommended by



Cervical cancer death rates are much higher than thought, study says



The most expensive place to live in 2017 is ...

Content by LendingTree



Rates now at 3.2% APR (15 Yr Fixed). Do you qualify?

Fastest way to pay off \$10,000 in credit card debt

Can you save on your mortgage?

The amazing VA benefits not enough vets are claiming

People are stockpiling miles with this insane credit card

Paid Partner Content

Transferring your balance to an 18-month 0% APR is ingenious *NextAdvisor*

Trump's plan could make investors very wealthy *The Motley Fool*

10 mind-blowing credit cards charging 0% interest until 2018 *NextAdvisor*

Apple quietly leases 5,000 acre abandoned military base *The Motley Fool*

Top 7 cards for excellent credit *NextAdvisor*

Advertisement



Sections

[Election Results](#)

[Nation](#)

[World](#)

[Our Team](#)

Follow us

