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Pirro confirmed as U.S. attorney for DC

Trump picks advance amid weekend sprint

Francesca Chambers and Chris Quintana
USA TODAY

In a weekend sprint to confirm President Donald Trump's nominees, the Senate on Aug. 1 approved Nicholas Kent – a former for-profit college executive and Virginia deputy education secretary – as undersecretary of education by a 50-45 vote, followed the next day by the confirmation of former Fox News host Jeanine Pirro as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

Pirro was confirmed as U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia in a party-line vote, 50-45. Republican Sens. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, Roger Wicker of Mississippi, Tim Scott of South Carolina and Democratic Sens. Ruben Gallego and Peter Welch did not cast votes.

"I am blessed to have received a Senate confirmation vote this evening of 50 to 45 to be the United States attorney for the District of Columbia the largest United States Attorney's Office in the country," Pirro posted on X. "Thank you to those senators who supported my confirmation and DC – get ready for a real crime fighter."

The conservative television star has been serving in the role on an interim basis since May, when Trump withdrew his previous nominee, Ed Martin, amid Republican criticism of Martin's support for Jan. 6 rioters. Trump granted clemency to the rioters on his first day in office.

Pirro was the elected district attorney in Westchester County, New York, and a county judge before she joined Fox. She hosted "Justice with Judge Jeanine" on the network for 11 years and was named in a defamation lawsuit brought by Dominion Voting Systems that ended in a \$787.5 million settlement.

Days before Pirro's confirmation, Trump directed lawmakers to postpone



Pirro

their summer recess and clear a backlog of nominees, including his judicial picks, whose confirmations had been delayed by Democrats over objections to his agenda.

Kent, the undersecretary at the Department of Education, oversees billions in federal financial aid and is charged with ensuring America's colleges provide a quality education.



Kent

Kent had won the support of several prominent university trade groups that are opposed to Trump's attacks on universities but said they supported Kent's nomination. His confirmation comes as the Trump administration seeks to reshape higher education and has launched numerous investigations into high-profile universities.

Kent had already been working at the agency on the administration's initiatives such as K-12 school choice. But before working in the government, Kent had a long history working for or close to for-profit colleges.

From 2008 to the end of 2015, Kent worked for Education Affiliates, a for-profit college company. When he left, he was a vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs. In 2015, the Justice Department announced the company had agreed to a \$13 million settlement to settle accusations it had gamed the federal financial aid system. The company told USA TODAY that Kent was not involved in the settlement or the allegations of fraud.

Critics, including student advocacy groups and teachers unions, had called on the Senate Education Committee to put Kent through a public hearing to answer questions about his time working for the company.

Kent also worked for Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's administration as a deputy secretary of education.

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