

CABINET APPOINTEE: DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

President-elect Joe Biden is expected to nominate Jennifer Granholm to lead the Department of Energy. Ms. Granholm previously served two terms as Governor of Michigan, from January 2003 to January 2011.

Ballard Spahr Partner [Kenneth M. Jarin](#) and former Pennsylvania Governor [Edward G. Rendell](#), both members of the firm's [Government Relations and Public Policy Group](#), shared their insights on Gov. Granholm and what the future may hold for her in this role.

How did you come to know Gov. Granholm?

Mr. Jarin: I met Governor Granholm when I was the Treasurer of the Democratic Governors' Association and she was serving as Governor of Michigan. She had a leadership role in the Association, so we worked together closely during my six years as Treasurer. Gov. Granholm hosted us in Michigan for countless Association meetings and events, and she and I became close friends. After she left office, Gov. Granholm became involved in a few organizations I was working with—specifically Media Matters for America and American Bridge 21st Century—that serve as media watchdogs. We've worked together with these organizations for more than a decade now and were particularly active this year because of the election. In the 10 months leading up to the election, I had meetings with Gov. Granholm weekly on Zoom.

Gov. Rendell: Governor Granholm and I were both in the freshman class of governors in 2003, along with Jim Doyle of Wisconsin, Janet Napolitano of Arizona, and Christine O'Grady Gregoire, who became Governor of Washington in 2005. The five of us became good friends and stayed good friends. We used to call each other for advice on problems. We all got re-elected. When we spoke with one voice, we were pretty powerful, speaking for five big states. Jennifer endured a lot during her time as governor. The car industry was leveled by the economy, but she was re-elected because the people of Michigan understood that she always told the truth, never sugar-coated anything, and always had solutions to make things better. There is nothing more formative to someone's ability to get things done than surviving a rough patch. I think that Jennifer Granholm, more than any other

governor during that time, survived rough times, went on to be re-elected and left office with a very high favorability rating.

Why do you think she was chosen? What makes her uniquely qualified for this position?

Mr. Jarin: If I've learned anything about Gov. Granholm during my nearly two decades of knowing her, it's that she's an incredibly smart, competent, and dynamic leader. She also has extensive experience with the automotive industry, which will be key in her role as the Energy Secretary. The Biden Administration will certainly be looking to support the rollout of electric vehicles and charging stations over the next four years. The auto industry knows and trusts Gov. Granholm to help it make this transition. She is known for her commitment to transitioning the U.S. to a clean-energy economy, but she also understands the support that the private sector will need to provide in order to accomplish the transition.

Gov. Rendell: Jennifer knows a lot about energy, had a lot of innovative energy proposals when she was Governor, and has a strong understanding and relationships in the auto industry. The next Secretary of Energy is going to have to find ways to

reshape our vehicular transportation, both from an environmental and economic perspective and Jennifer has a great relationship with the industry. She will be a hands-on, pragmatic Secretary of Energy. I look forward to working closely with her to help her develop her plans over the next few years.

In what ways will the department's policies differ from those of the Trump Administration under her leadership?

Mr. Jarin: Under the Trump Administration, there was a focus on promoting natural gas exports and pushing regulators to prop up coal as a power source. The Biden Administration, in contrast, will be more interested in developing the technologies needed fulfill the campaign's promise to wean the country off fossil fuels. Gov. Granholm will undoubtedly place more focus on the environmental effects of our country's energy program.

Gov. Rendell: The Department will be much more environmentally

friendly. Doing something about climate change is one of the top two or three priorities of the Biden Administration. You will see a huge consideration of environmental concerns from Jennifer and from the Biden administration more generally.

What do you anticipate the biggest challenges being in her first year?

Mr. Jarin: The Department seems to have suffered from a lack of professional leadership over the last four years. Gov. Granholm will first have to work on restoring the Department's competence, confidence, and morale. When it comes to policy challenges, she will almost certainly have to face the question of the future of existing nuclear power plants.

Gov. Rendell: There is a lot of intransigence on the other side, and a lot of climate change deniers in the Republican Party. She will have to overcome some opposition there, particularly if the Republicans maintain control of the Senate. But

I think Jennifer will be very good at reaching across the aisle and getting allies. I predict she'll work well with Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, and Ben Sasse. There are a few Republicans who will have an open mind when it comes to helping her with her policies.

Anything else we should know about Gov. Granholm?

Mr. Jarin: She makes friends and fans wherever she goes. One time, I was out to dinner with her in New York. I heard this big, booming voice behind me say, "Is that Governor Granholm? I am big fan!" I turned around and it was Charles Barkley. This basketball legend acted like he was meeting a celebrity. He sat down and talked to us for an hour.

Gov. Rendell: She made the best convention speech ever in 2012, nominating President Obama in Charlotte. She was colorful and funny as can be. She had the delegates roaring, laughing and applauding like crazy. She got the biggest ovation I've seen. It was the most entertaining political speech I've ever heard.



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