

Trump loyalist Kash Patel becomes director of FBI, which he vows to remake

FBI director Kash Patel was confirmed 51-49. He is a staunch ally of President Donald Trump who has called for profound changes at the bureau.

By Mark Berman and Jeremy Roebuck
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The Senate on Thursday narrowly voted to confirm Kash Patel as the FBI's ninth director, installing [a close ally](#) of President Donald Trump and a [staunch critic of the bureau](#) to lead the country's premier law enforcement agency.

Patel will take command of an organization with far-reaching surveillance powers and access to sensitive intelligence at a moment when the agency is engulfed by turbulence and uncertainty.

Since Trump's inauguration, at least eight top officials have been forced out, and people familiar with the bureau's workforce say morale has plummeted amid fears of further staffing shake-ups.

Patel, a former Trump aide, federal prosecutor and assistant public defender, said he would work with the bureau's employees to "rebuild an FBI the American people can be proud of."

"The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice," Patel posted in a message on social media after his confirmation. "The politicalization of our justice system has eroded public trust — but that ends today."

Patel was [approved 51-49](#), a remarkably tight margin for a position that historically has seen nominees win overwhelming bipartisan support. The three most recent FBI directors each garnered at least 92 votes.

Senators Susan Collins (Maine) and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) were the only Republicans to [vote against Patel](#).

The GOP-majority Senate has [approved every Trump nominee](#) to come before the chamber, though [three Republican defections](#) on Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth meant Vice President JD Vance, who serves as Senate president, was called in to cast the tiebreaking vote.

Patel's record diverges from those of his recent predecessors at the FBI, who had held senior roles with the Justice Department before being tapped as directors. Patel spent Trump's first term working as a congressional staffer, White House aide and Pentagon staffer. Since then, he has found lucrative work as a consultant and has been a dedicated defender of Trump on podcasts and television.

His nomination [prompted alarm](#) from many national security veterans and people who have worked with him, who said he lacked the temperament and experience needed for such a pivotal and powerful law enforcement role.

While Democratic senators also expressed [deep concerns](#), pointing to Patel's history of inflammatory rhetoric and calls for [retribution](#) against perceived enemies, many of their Republican counterparts hailed him as the person needed to fix an agency they see as biased against conservatives.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, has accused Patel of directing purges at the FBI while awaiting confirmation, citing information from "credible whistleblowers." Patel's spokeswoman denied the allegation.

FBI leaders in the modern era have sought to keep some distance between themselves and presidents, and Patel appears to be the first director to have so closely allied himself with the commander in chief who nominated him. He was a campaign surrogate for Trump and served on the board of the president's media company.

In his new position, Patel will lead a mammoth organization with more than 30,000 employees, hundreds of offices nationwide and a sprawling mandate to investigate cases involving national security, terrorism and violent crimes.

Since long before his nomination, Patel has called for [profound changes](#) within the FBI. His 2023 book described the bureau as "a tool of surveillance and

suppression of American citizens” and said its powers should be dramatically curtailed.

Trump [announced](#) his plans to make Patel the FBI director in November, making clear that he would oust [Christopher A. Wray](#), whom Trump appointed during his first term. Wray was more than seven years into [a 10-year term limit](#) for FBI directors, a period instituted to shield the job from political swings. He opted to [resign](#) before Trump retook the White House.

Patel’s supporters include [a group of former agents](#) who have previously been accused of misconduct and were suspended. These former agents, who deny wrongdoing, have accepted financial help from Patel’s nonprofit foundation in some cases and say they have been in touch with him since he was nominated.

Attorney General Pam Bondi, who was confirmed earlier this month and is also a Trump loyalist, endorsed Patel for his new job, though during her confirmation hearing she noted that as FBI director, he would report to her.

“We’ve got Kash Patel now, so they better look out,” Bondi said at a conservative conference late Thursday afternoon. She did not specify whom she meant by “they.”

Thursday morning, Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee made a public plea to their GOP colleagues to oppose Patel’s nomination.

“Mr. Patel will be a political and national security disaster if confirmed,” Durbin said at a news conference outside the FBI headquarters — a building Patel has said he would shut down and reopen as a museum for the so-called deep state. In an interview afterward, Durbin said some Republican lawmakers had privately expressed concerns about Patel leading the bureau but were too fearful about losing reelection campaigns to vote against him.

Democrats have questioned Patel’s financial ties to a Chinese company, history of incendiary rhetoric and support for right-wing conspiracy theories and rioters involved in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, which Patel has said the FBI had planned for a year.

But Senate Republicans almost uniformly backed him. Before voting to support Patel's nomination, Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) said he looked "forward to working with Mr. Patel to restore the integrity of the FBI and get it focused on its critical mission."

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), who chairs the Judiciary Committee, called Patel a reformer who would bring needed change to the bureau.

"Over the past several years, political infection has diminished the FBI's credibility and distracted the Bureau from its core law enforcement responsibilities," Grassley said in a statement after the confirmation vote. "As FBI Director, Kash Patel promises to restore the FBI's primary focus on law and order, as well as national security, and do right by the brave FBI agents who work day in and day out to keep Americans safe."

The two Republicans who opposed Patel's nomination pointed to his history of political actions. In a statement before voting no, Collins said she doubted Patel could lead the FBI "in a way that is free from the appearance of political motivation."

Murkowski [posted](#) on social media that she had reservations due to Patel's "own prior political activities and how they may influence his leadership."

"I truly hope that he proves me wrong about the reservations I have of him today," she added.

Some Democrats said they had lost that hope before the vote.

"We will vote no," Sen. Adam Schiff (D-California) said at the morning news conference. "Our Republican colleagues, intimidated by this president and threats of primary challenges from MAGA world, may vote to confirm him. But ... they will have to live with that vote."

Perry Stein and Liz Goodwin contributed to this report.