

# Former Trump Officials Say Means Unfit For Surgeon General Role

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(Inside Health Policy)

The nomination of Casey Means to serve as the Trump administration's surgeon general has stalled after her confirmation hearing reportedly failed to impress Republican skeptics including Senate health committee Chair Bill Cassidy (LA), and now officials from President Donald Trump's first term are publicly stating she's unsuitable for the job, citing her lack of an active medical license, record of dietary supplement sponsorship, and views outside the mainstream of western medicine.

Means faced sharp questions from both Republicans and Democrats during her February appearance before the Senate health committee, and the *Washington Post* reports Cassidy and at least three other GOP senators are holdouts on supporting her confirmation.

Marc Short, who served as Trump's director of legislative affairs during his first administration, wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed published March 20 that Means is not qualified to hold the role and suggested the position should be eliminated altogether. Short, who also served as chief of staff to former vice president Mike Pence, is now the chairman of Advancing American Freedom, a conservative organization Pence founded.

Short said conservatives "should push to eliminate the surgeon general position altogether, not spend political capital and Senate floor time confirming someone whose record and public opinion polling are so bad they prove that the government should never be trusted on matters of health."

"When the Founding Fathers drafted the Constitution, they didn't see fit to create an office of surgeon general. It probably never occurred to them that the nation needed a government-appointed chief medical expert swaggering around in a naval uniform," Short wrote. "They would surely have questioned the wisdom of giving a single, politically connected individual a state-sanctioned platform to make pronouncements about medicine."

Short noted that while there are no specific qualifications for the surgeon general position, Means stands out as someone not well-suited to serve as the nation's "top doc." Means graduated from medical school but did not complete her residency and does not hold an active medical license; her prominence comes from her role as a social media influencer.

Means and her brother Calley Means, now working with the White House Domestic Policy Council, have been criticized for numerous perceived conflicts of interest, including ties to the dietary supplement industry.

“Means’s platforms have featured sponsorships from supplement companies and other commercial partnerships that raise obvious conflict-of-interest questions. Americans have grown weary of a health culture that blurs the line between public service and product placement,” Short wrote. “Elevating a figure associated with supplement marketing to the nation’s top medical advisory role risks deepening that cynicism.”

**The op-ed noted Means’ writings have often blurred the line between medical issues and spiritual ones.** Means has written about spiritual practices that include the use of hallucinogenic mushroom psilocybin. She frequently writes about public health issues in spiritual terms.

In a blog post on pesticide use, for example, Means wrote, “If we humans are spiritual beings fortunate enough to be having a dualistic experience in a material body for a brief period of time, then our use of synthetic pesticides is giving a poor signal to God (Source!) that we want this miracle to continue. If we keep acting so reckless with death-promoting synthetic chemicals, I fear that Source may choose to pass this particular species by.”

“Americans are free to pursue whatever spiritual path they choose. But the surgeon general is not a shaman,” Short wrote. “Means would be tasked with translating rigorous scientific consensus into clear public guidance, not exploring the healing power of crystals and drum circles.”

**Trump’s first surgeon general, Jerome Adams, has also opposed Means’ confirmation.** He wrote on social media, “Her not having an active license is a failure to meet a basic operational requirement for the job.” Noting that all other physicians with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps are required to have active licenses, Adams said confirming Means would be equivalent to “diversity, equity and inclusion” exemptions from hiring criteria Republicans have slammed.

**Some conservative commentators have continued pushing for Means to be confirmed.** The Daily Caller published an op-ed from commentator Sam Raus, a fellow with the group Young Voices, who wrote, “Dr. Casey Means represents a generation ready to rebuild health in America with clarity, discipline and optimism -- not ideology. Her success would mark another milestone for the Make America Healthy Again movement, and for an administration determined to put American strength -- body, mind and spirit - back at the center of national life.”

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