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**Subject:** Senate panel advances Interior nominee

By Esther Whieldon

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The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee voted 14-9 to approve David Bernhardt as Interior deputy secretary today.

Democratic Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) (W.Va.) and Independent [Angus King](#) (Maine) joined Republicans in supporting Bernhardt's nomination for the number two spot at the agency.

Bernhardt worked at the Interior during the George W. Bush administration in such high-ranking positions as solicitor and chief of staff. Most recently the Colorado native was a lobbyist for Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck where he represented a number of oil and mining companies and several major players in California's water wars.

Before the vote, committee ranking Democrat Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#) of Washington said she remains concerned about Bernhardt's industry ties and his refusal to recuse himself for the duration of his term from certain issues. Bernhardt "would bring a great deal of unwelcome baggage to the department," she said.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** Bernhardt's nomination now heads to a full chamber vote, which has yet to be scheduled.

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