



JOE GROGAN

WHITE HOUSE DIRECTOR OF DOMESTIC POLICY COUNCIL

NationalJournal

Life in Brief

Current Residence: Washington, DC

Education:

- JD, College of William and Mary, 2000
- BA, State University of New York-Albany, 1994

Work History:

- Assistant to the President/Director of the Domestic Policy Council, White House, February 2019-Present
- Associate Director of Health Programs, Office of Management and Budget, 2017-2019
- Senior Director of Government Affairs, Gilead Sciences, 2011-2017
- Director, Global Regulatory Affairs and Safety, Amgen, 2009-2011
- Vice President, Marwood Group, 2008-2009
- Senior Policy Advisor, FDA, 2006-2008
- Executive Director, Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS, 2004-2006
- Special Assistant, Administration for Children and Families, 2001-2004

Quick Summary

Former pharmaceutical lobbyist and George W. Bush alum who leads the White House's health policy initiatives; committed to lowering drug prices, even through measures unpopular with Republican mainstream, such as foreign price-indexing

- Top government affairs official from pharmaceutical giant Gilead who saw the company through public scandals surrounding pricing of Sovaldi and Truvada
- Gained public sector experience as a policy advisor in the George W. Bush Administration and has advanced from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to the Domestic Policy Council; deep ties to bureaucrats in Bush and Trump administrations
- Prioritizes lowering drug costs and reforming the Affordable Care Act (ACA); has begun to tackle issues such as school choice
- Considered a disciple of acting White House Chief Mick Mulvaney, with whom he shares a skepticism for the GOP establishment
- Aligns with Trump's populist, nonconformist brand of conservatism
- Willing to challenge authority; has track record of blocking policies he sees as politically risky, especially proposals by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar

Approach and Motivations

Informed by industry lessons; unafraid to deviate from Republican establishment and stresses importance of public opinion

- Cites experience with how private industry operates and interacts with government; involves pharmaceutical companies in policy process
- Colleagues have said that his time at Gilead persuaded him to favor aggressive price reforms outside of the Republican mainstream
- Fearful of the political fallout associated with denying coverage for expensive drugs, citing experience with pushback from HIV/AIDS groups

Policy Positions and Areas of Focus

Breaks with Republican establishment and pharmaceutical industry on health care reform and drug pricing; aligns closely with Republicans on charter schools

Health Care Reform: *Rolling back government-run health care while reining in measures that may spark political fallout*

- Finalized Health Reimbursement Accounts rule, allowing employers to opt out of providing company-run health plans and give workers tax-free accounts to buy a health plan on their own, with the goal of eroding the ACA
- Credited with killing the rebate rule to ban rebates negotiated by PBMs and paid by drug companies to insurers
- Forced Secretary Azar to withdraw proposal to reform Medicare's protected class, which would have allowed insurance plans to end coverage of medications for mental health and rare diseases if prices increased faster than inflation

Drug Pricing: *Lowering consumer costs through price indexing and pharmaceutical imports*

- Chief advocate of international price index model to tie U.S. drug prices to foreign markets
- Worked with Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) on bill that ties Medicare drug prices to the rate of inflation while capping what seniors pay out-of-pocket for prescriptions
- Supporter of importing prescription drugs from Canada, a measure many Republicans oppose
- Skeptical of Trump proposal to force drug companies to list drug prices in television advertisements, claiming it would do little to lower prices and risks First Amendment violation

Education: *Pushes for school choice via charter school funding*

- Has stated that the public school system in which children are assigned to a school by the government is flawed; argues students should have choices despite economic means
- Works on expanding school choice programs, including through Educational Freedom Scholarships

Core Communities

Well-connected to appointees in Bush 43 and Trump administrations; maintains ties to health care industry

Health Policy Bureaucrats: *From time in two Republican administrations, has fostered relationships with health policy wonks*

- Worked as an HIV/AIDS adviser to President George W. Bush with fellow Bush-appointee Tommy Thompson
- Has worked extensively alongside HHS Secretary Alex Azar; Azar and Grogan have clashed on issues such as Medicare reform
- Strong relationships with top Trump health care appointees, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma and FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb

Trump Administration: *Tight connections to senior advisors*

- Close ally of former-acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, who he followed from OMB to the White House
- Long-standing friendship with former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, with whom he lived with after graduating college and with whom he worked with at National Republican Senatorial Committee
- Worked alongside Jessica Anderson in Trump's budget department, who now serves as Heritage Action's Vice President

Health Care Industry: *Ties to pharmaceutical companies and executives*

- Government affairs roles at two pharmaceutical companies, Amgen and Gilead Sciences
- At Gilead, worked closely with VP of Medical Affairs Bill Guyer on lobbying for the company's Hepatitis C drug; Guyer remains at the company as Senior VP/Global Head of Medical Affairs
- While at OMB, invited member of a Gilead advisory board to present at meeting of Drug Pricing and Innovation Working Group

Relevant Financial Information

Received high salary from Gilead; has donated to Republican campaigns and pharma PACs

Personal Income

- Listed income from Gilead Sciences as \$823,000

Political Donations

- Has donated \$4,500 to Gilead Sciences Inc. Healthcare Policy PAC between 2014-16
- Donated \$2,000 to Trump in 2016
- Donated \$250 to Jon Brunning's (R-NE) Senate campaign in 2011

Publications, Media, and Speaking

Focuses on views of government-run health insurance and drug pricing; in his capacity as Assistant to the President, also acts as a voice for Trump's proposals

Publications: *Has authored op-eds in national newspapers on the Trump Administration's approach to lowering health care costs*

- Favorite Subjects: Criticisms of universal health care, drug costs, surprise medical billing
- Preferred Outlets: National outlets including the Wall Street Journal, FOX News, Washington Post, and the New York Post

Media: *Speaks in conservative media on President Trump's initiatives and health care reform*

- Favorite Subjects: President Trump, lowering health care costs, the budget
- Preferred Outlets: Conservative cable news outlets including Breitbart News, FOX News, and EWTN; and conservative talk shows including John Fredericks Radio
- Social Media Habits: Active on Twitter

Speaking: *Speaks at health conferences and think tanks on budgetary impact of health policy*

- Favorite Subjects: Drug pricing, public-private partnerships, health care reform
- Preferred Audience: Health policy stakeholders including the Federation of American Hospitals, the Marwood Group, and HTLT; and think tanks including the Milken Institute

Family and Personal Background

Keeps personal life private

Criticisms and Controversies

Accused of conflict of interest with former employer

- In July 2018, House Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings raised concerns that Grogan was in violation of the Trump Administration's ethics rules, given that he was helping develop a reimbursement policy for innovative cancer drugs while Gilead was looking to acquire a company developing the same method of treatment
- Grogan said had sold all stock in the company and there was no conflict of interest

COVID-19 Update

Influential relationship with COVID-19 treatment developer Gilead Sciences; keeps a low profile but has spoken out on progress of public health response

Relevant Positions

- Member of the President's Coronavirus Task Force
- Former lobbyist for Gilead Sciences, which is conducting clinical trials on an experimental drug to treat COVID-19

Statements: *Echoes Administration priorities but has been critical of speed of response; proponent of rapid testing*

- According to reports, tried to sound alarms in mid-January that the threat of COVID-19 was growing
- Carries optimistic message about country's ability to overcome the outbreak, aligning with the Administration's rhetoric; with Mick Mulvaney, reportedly criticized HHS Secretary Alex Azar for failing to escalate the potential risks to Trump
- Has called rapid testing an important step in the fight against community spread