

## Citizen Green: Will Aldona Wos be our next secretary of state?

By Jordan Green  
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As a Republican fundraiser, Dr. Aldona Wos has demonstrated an uncanny ability to position herself close to the power centers of the state and federal government.

In 2003, she was appointed the North Carolina finance co-chair of the 2004 Bush-Cheney re-election campaign, and soon was rewarded with appointment as ambassador to Estonia. In 2012, Wos raised money for Republican Pat McCrory, who appointed her secretary of health and human services after his election as governor. Wos' tenure at DHHS was marred by continual backlogs in food-assistance benefits and questions about a lucrative consulting contract with an employee of her husband's logistics firm, but upon her resignation in 2015, Gov. McCrory famously wept with gratitude for her service.

Over the past weekend, Wos and husband Louis DeJoy hosted President Trump at their \$4.8 million Irving Park mansion in Greensboro for a \$2,700-per-head fundraiser to benefit the Trump Victory Committee, a joint venture between the president and the Republican National Committee.

The invitation to the fundraiser, which aimed to raise \$2 million, reportedly advised guests: "The president and his team have had some missteps. However, it is hard to deny the extreme and unreasonable challenges he faces from the political establishment, the left-wing groups, the media and many of the federal employees of the agencies of the executive branch."

The unmistakable message from Dr. Wos to Trump: You need me.

As the relationship between Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson continues to deteriorate, it's worth keeping an eye on Dr. Wos, a Polish-born physician who has nurtured a lifelong interest in diplomacy and international affairs. Even if she didn't get a chance to corner Trump at her Country Club Drive mansion on Oct. 7, Wos has likely found an opportunity to give the president advice on foreign affairs since he appointed her vice-chair of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships in May.

It's no small irony that Wos is a part of the very foreign-policy establishment that Trump trashed during the 2016 primary. Following her service as ambassador to Estonia, she joined the board of trustees of the Washington-based Institute of World Politics, a graduate school of national security and international affairs that occupies a segment of the ideological spectrum from center-right to neoconservative.

In April 2016, Wos brought former CIA Director James Woolsey, a guest lecturer at the institute, and John Lenczowski, its founder, to the Grandover Resort in Greensboro for a discussion about the foreign-policy implications of the election. Woolsey and other neoconservatives advocated for the 2003 invasion of Iraq — an action that Trump has dubiously claimed to have opposed at the time.

Two days after Woolsey's visit to Greensboro, Trump outlined a vision "to establish a foreign policy that will endure for several generations" at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. He added, "That's why I also look and have to look for talented experts with approaches and practical ideas, rather than surrounding myself with those who have perfect résumés but very little to brag about except responsibility for a long history of failed policies and continued losses at war."

In her role as political fundraiser and convener, Wos may turn out to be the bridge between the old neocon movement and the nationalist spirit of the Trump age.

Wos, who could not be reached for this story, hasn't said much publicly about her ideology, despite playing master of ceremonies for high-profile visitors like Woolsey and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, but it's clear that her worldview was profoundly shaped by the Nazi and Soviet occupations of Poland. Paul Zenon Wos, her father, helped Jews escape the Warsaw ghetto, according to the 2010 book *Code Name: Zegota: Rescuing Jews in Occupied Poland*, and survived the Flossenbürg concentration camp. Born in Warsaw in 1955, Aldona Wos experienced the Soviet occupation. She told an audience at the Empire Room in downtown Greensboro in 2007 that when the secret police came to the house to pick up her father, the family never knew whether he would return, adding, "The environment deprived all of us of our dignity and our rights."

Remarkably, the Wos family story is closely intertwined with the setting and themes of President Trump's July 6 speech at Krasinski Square in front of the monument to the Warsaw Uprising. The speech made only one reference to the Jewish population, which was almost completely erased from Poland during the Holocaust, but hammered at themes of Polish resistance against foreign invaders, almost as if using the central European country as a stand-in for Trump's view of the United States. Trump concluded with a defense of "Western civilization" that focused not on democracy, liberty or human rights, but on "the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are."

The speech was written by Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, but according to *Newsweek*, Polish state television reported that a Polish-American historian named Marek Jan Chodakiewicz had been consulted on the speech by the White House. Chodakiewicz holds the Kosciuszko Chair in Polish Studies at the Institute of World Politics, where Wos serves as a trustee. Rafal Pankowski of the Polish anti-racist organization *Never Again*, has written that Chodakiewicz's scholarship tends to deny or downplay the participation of Poles in the persecution of Jews in wartime Poland.

It's not at all clear what views Dr. Wos holds on Poland's World War II history or the new American nationalism promoted by President Trump. What is clear is that there are many powerful people who hold her in high regard, including former CIA Director James Woolsey.

Regaling the audience at the Grandover Resort in Greensboro in April 2016, John Lenczowski told Wos: "Jim said, 'If it ever comes down to having to go to war with North Korea, he would appoint you to be the four-star general.'"

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