

Meta Sees Red: A Case Study in Changing Board Politics

By [Adrian D. Garcia](#) May 19, 2025

During a Fox News interview with **Lara Trump** last month, **Ultimate Fighting Championship** President and CEO **Dana White** basked in being a newcomer to the **Meta** board.

Conservatives previously felt there was "a lot silencing and a lot of suppression on multiple social media sites, but to have you at Meta makes people feel pretty good," the president's daughter-in-law said, adding that it seemed that **Mark Zuckerberg** had "turned over a new leaf."

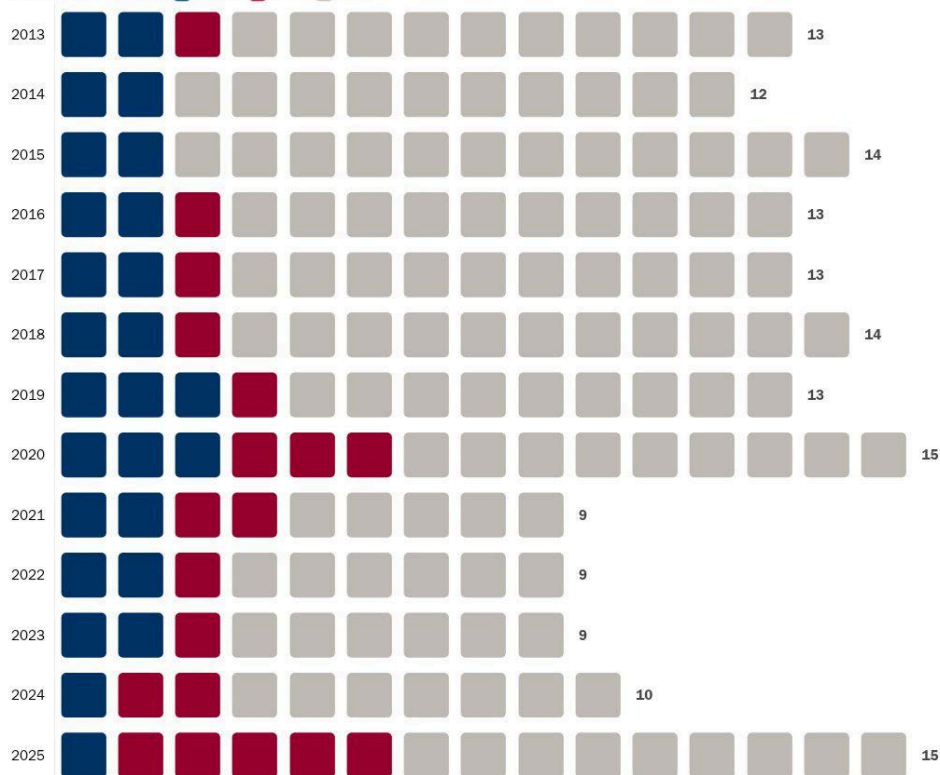
The UFC boss, a [longtime friend](#) of President **Donald Trump**, is one of five directors Meta has added to its board this year ahead of its annual meeting May 28.

Overall, five of Meta's 15 directors now have direct links to current and former Republican administrations, including four to Trump. The board changes offer a glimpse into one company's strategy as it navigates the shifting regulatory regime and evolving business challenges. In Meta's case, these include a landmark antitrust case and steep competition around artificial intelligence.

The Meta Board's Ties to D.C.

Below are Meta directors who have worked with current and past presidential administrations.

Administration served: ■ Dems ■ GOP ■ Neither



Source: Meta proxy statements

AGENDA

White is a high-profile supporter of Trump's, joining him on the campaign trail and speaking at the past three Republican National Conventions. Trump, in turn, last month became the first sitting president to [attend a UFC event](#).

His addition to the Meta board evolved from Zuckerberg's fascination with UFC.

Just a few weeks after testifying to Congress in January 2024, a tracksuit-clad Zuckerberg walked mixed martial artist **Alexander Volkanovski** to the ring during a UFC event in Anaheim, California. The **Meta** CEO had previously [trained](#) with other UFC fighters as well as attended other events, but this was a new level of public presence with the sport.

A few months later, on Jan. 6, Meta named White a director.

"It started with UFC and then he invited me and asked me to be on his board," White said during his Fox News [interview](#) in April. "I had my first board meeting about a month ago, and would I ever think that I would be friends with the president of the United States and things? Well, I would have never imagined that I would join a board."

"But I'm so into social media. And now to be able to be on the inside and have a hand in the future of it and learn from the inside out. ... Yeah, I would have never not taken this opportunity," he added.

A day after adding White, Meta announced a different approach to content moderation, ending its third-party fact-checking program and recommending more political content to those who may be interested in the topic. The systems created "in response to societal and political pressure to moderate content" had gone too far, Chief Global Affairs Officer **Joel Kaplan** [said](#). Zuckerberg, meanwhile, pledged to work with Trump to combat governments around the world that are "going after American companies and pushing to censor more."

Last month, Meta added **Dina Powell McCormick**, the former deputy national security advisor to Trump, as a director.

"Ms. Powell McCormick's extensive financial and investment experience, as well as her service in diplomatic and national security roles, provide our board of directors with relevant skills and perspective to navigate the challenges of the dynamic regulatory and geopolitical environments and execute on our strategic priorities," the company's proxy statement notes.

A Meta spokesperson declined multiple requests for comment.

Watching Washington

Meta's not the only company that has [sought ties](#) to the current administration. The Japanese investment firm **Metaplanet**, for example, added **Eric Trump** to its board in April.

Directors with political and government experience may help companies navigate federal contracts and the regulatory environment as well as influencing policies, said **Greg Selker**,

AGENDA

managing director and North America technology and global subsector leader at executive search firm **Stanton Chase**.

"It's never clear for sure what the ties get any company," said **Hillary Sale**, a professor of leadership and corporate governance at **Georgetown University's** McDonough School of Business.

"But it is arguably true that in this administration, which appears to be a lot more transactional, that the ties can be valuable in terms of getting your case heard and maybe even getting the outcomes you want," she added.

Meta is unusual in that Zuckerberg's nearly complete ownership of Class B shares gives the CEO about 61% of voting power. Sale and others have [contended](#) that this structure makes him immune from board input.

Adding directors linked to Trump may not make a big difference for Meta's business strategy, Sale said. "But it may well make a difference in terms of perception of who's on the board."

Changing of the Guard

Meta is also among the maturing West Coast tech companies that are beginning to operate more like the big players in other industries, said **Craig Stevens**, managing partner and advisory council chair of CEO and board services at **Boyden**.

"If you look at pharma, if you look at financial services and you look at the bios of the board members, they all have at least one person that's functioned on some level inside Washington," Stevens said.






"What Meta has done is concluded that this current political climate has significant strategic risk in the way of the political dynamic and so they've responded accordingly," he added.

When Meta debuted as a public company in 2012, **Erskine Bowles** was the only independent director with experience in Washington,

Government and Governance

Meta's West Coast tech peers have also selected those with government and regulatory experience to join their boards. Plus, the CEOs of Alphabet, Apple and Microsoft have been tapped for federal commissions and advisory councils.

Independent directors with government experience

 Roger Ferguson Jr.  Alphabet director since 2016 President Bill Clinton named Ferguson as Vice Chair of the Board of Governors for the Federal Reserve. In 2000, President George W. Bush asked him to continue serving the Fed.	 Gen. Keith Alexander  Amazon director since 2020 Alexander served as the director of the National Security Agency and Chief of the Central Security Service under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. He was also commander of the U.S. Cyber Command under Obama.	 Jamie Gorelick  Amazon director since 2012 She was deputy attorney general under President Clinton and previously his general counsel of the Department of Defense. Under President Jimmy Carter, she was assistant to the Secretary and counselor to the Deputy Secretary of Energy.
 Wendell Weeks  Amazon director since 2016 In 2023, President Joe Biden appointed Weeks to the U.S. Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.	 Wanda Austin  Apple director since 2024 Austin was on the NASA Advisory Council from 2005 to 2007 and again from 2014 to 2016. President Obama selected her for the Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. She was also on the Defense Policy Board from 2017 to 2019.	 Kristina Johnson  Cisco director since 2012 Johnson was appointed by President Obama to be the Under Secretary of Energy at the Department of Energy.
 Penny Pritzker  Microsoft director since 2017 Pritzker served as Secretary of Commerce under President Obama. During Biden's term, she was on the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and a U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery.	 Arnold Donald  Salesforce lead director since 2023 Donald was appointed by President Clinton to serve on the President's Export Council. President George W. Bush reappointed him in 2003.	 John Roos  Salesforce director since 2013 President Obama named Roos the ambassador to Japan from 2009 to 2013.

Source: Company filings

AGENDA

having previously served on President **Barack Obama's** National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. He was also White House chief of staff to President **Bill Clinton**, whose administration included Meta's former chief operational officer, **Sheryl Sandberg**.

Bowles left in 2019, after Facebook [discovered](#) Russia and **Cambridge Analytica** had used its data and platform to meddle in the 2016 presidential election.

Meta's board has been becoming steadily more linked with political conservatives. Longtime director **Peter Thiel**, for instance, was part of Trump's transition team for his first election. He [departed](#) the Meta board in 2022 to focus on getting GOP candidates elected.

Marc Andreessen, who has been a director since 2008, [helped hire](#) for the Trump's Department of Government of Efficiency. Earlier this year, he [told](#) The New York Times' opinion section that Trump's becoming the Republican nominee in 2016 can be treated as "a decisive break toward whatever the next phase of Silicon Valley ideology is" and explained his shift away from being a "normie Democrat."

Unless a company is clearly backing a certain ideology, directors' political viewpoints don't impact the boardroom, Selker said.

"If you have a board where there are differences of experience, differences of opinion, differences in terms of backgrounds in how people view the world — that's a really healthy board," he said. "We can all have those differences, but be respectful to each other, because what we're committed to is to enact and help oversee policies that will drive profitable growth for our company."