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About This Issue



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We often read or hear about turmoil before, during, or after elections around the world. An important characteristic of democracy in the United States, however, is the regularly recurring peaceful transfer of power from one president to the next. Americans know when the next presidential election will take place — the Tuesday after the first Monday in November every four years. And power will be transferred to the newly elected (or re-elected) president on January 20 of the following year.

In this issue of *eJournal USA*, as another U.S. presidential transition takes place, we've tried to present our readers with insight into this process, including some historical background.

Experts Stephen Hess, Kurt Campbell, and Martha Kumar discuss the transition process, its foreign policy implications, and the art of media relations. Another expert, John Burke, describes what happens when a president is re-elected, a different kind of transition.

Interviews with Democrat Richard W. Riley, Bill Clinton's secretary of education, and Republican Stuart Holliday, a member of George W. Bush's transition team, describe the process from the inside. Terry Good, former director of the White House's Office of Records Management, provides a look at transitions from the viewpoint of civil servants who stay on and work for several consecutive administrations.

Sidebars and a photo gallery answer questions and present interesting facts about presidential transitions and inaugurations throughout U.S. history.

As a veteran of several transitions, Terry Good sums it up: "And so one cycle ends. Another begins. American democracy in action."

— *The Editors*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE / JANUARY 2009 / VOLUME 14 / NUMBER 1
<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournals.html>

U.S. Presidential Transitions

3 **A Checklist for New Presidents**

STEPHEN HESS, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
An expert provides an overview of presidential transitions, including some historical background.

7 **Governing Is Different From Campaigning**

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD W. RILEY, FORMER GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
A member of Bill Clinton's cabinet describes his experience as an insider.

11 **Personnel Is Policy**

AN INTERVIEW WITH STUART HOLLIDAY, PRESIDENT OF MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTER AND FORMER SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
A member of the Bush transition team and associate director of presidential personnel at the White House in 2000-2001 provides insight into the workings of the personnel system.

15 **Inaugurations of the Past — A Photo Gallery**

21 **Did You Know?**

22 **Early Challenges for a New Administration**

KURT CAMPBELL, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY
A recognized analyst discusses some of the major dangers and opportunities facing the incoming administration.

26 **The President and the Press**

MARTHA KUMAR, TOWSON UNIVERSITY
A scholar explains the complex relationship between the chief executive and the media.

31 **For the Record**

TERRY GOOD
The retired director of the Office of Records Management talks about transitions from the viewpoint of civil servants who stay on and work for several consecutive administrations.

37 **Second-Term Transitions**

JOHN BURKE, THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
A presidential scholar explains how there's a transition even when a president is re-elected.

41 **Transition FAQs**

Frequently asked questions about presidential transitions.

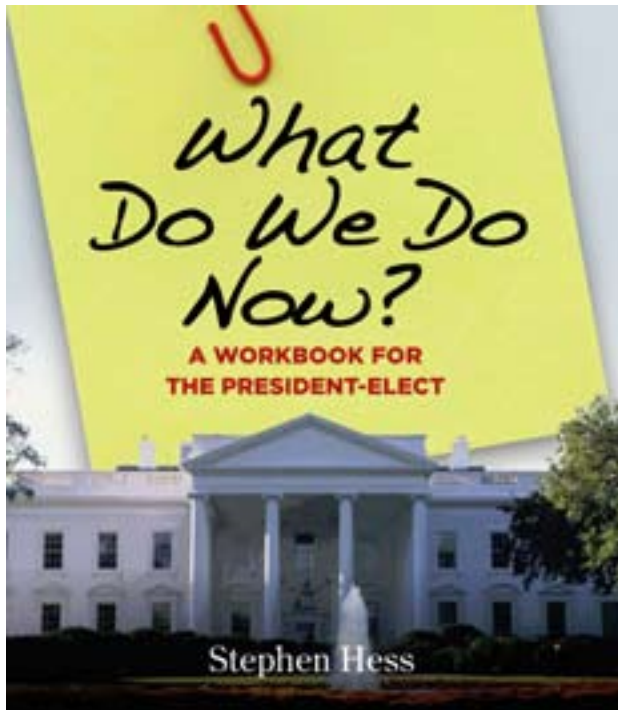
43 **Additional Resources**

A Checklist for New Presidents

Stephen Hess

One can think of an incoming president's tasks as "The Three Ps"—Personnel, Process, Policy. He must review the policy commitments he made during the campaign. In what order should he try to honor them? Some will take time. But because President Franklin Roosevelt created a remarkable record in his first 100 days, all presidents know that "100 days" is a marker the media will use to judge them.

Stephen Hess is Senior Fellow Emeritus at the Brookings Institution and Distinguished Research Professor of Media and Public Affairs at the George Washington University. His most recent book is What Do We Do Now? A Workbook for the President-Elect.



Courtesy Brookings Institution Press

Presidential elections in the United States take place every fourth year on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November — November 4 in 2008 — with the winner taking office, as it is written in the Constitution, “at noon on the 20th day of January.” This gap between election and inauguration is a uniquely

American phenomenon. If there is to be a new president, it is a period of great interest around the world. It is also a period with a history of confusion and even, on occasion, dire policy consequences. This does not happen in parliamentary systems, where there is instant governmental turnover.

The American transition gap goes back to the country's beginning in the 18th century, when rutted roads made it difficult to quickly assemble a new government. Indeed, presidents were inaugurated on March 4 until the date was finally changed to January 20 in 1933. Since then, Presidents Dwight Eisenhower (who was elected in 1952 and sworn in to office in 1953), John Kennedy (1960-61), Richard Nixon (1968-69), Jimmy Carter (1976-77), Ronald Reagan (1980-81), George H.W. Bush (1988-89), Bill Clinton (1992-93), and George W. Bush (2000-01) have maneuvered with varying degrees of success to create their presidential administrations in the allotted 10-plus weeks.

Their job is infinitely more difficult than that of the parliamentary prime minister who arrives in office trailed by a shadow cabinet or a government-in-exile. The U.S. president-elect starts from scratch. Moreover, no candidate did pre-election planning until Jimmy Carter in 1976. Conventional wisdom in the political world was that voters would resent activities that might look like candidates were taking victory for granted. Even now, early planning is done in a very guarded fashion.

SELECTING THE CABINET

The first order of transition business is for the president-elect to pick his White House staff and cabinet. This is a much more arduous task than in a parliamentary system. Whereas the prime minister chooses his cabinet officers from his colleagues in the legislature, the American president-elect casts his net as widely as he wishes, usually including state governors, business and labor officials, and academics, in addition to members of Congress. There is overheated lobbying by individuals and groups for these choice jobs, as well as endless press speculation. The cabinet consists of 15 departments — Agriculture,



President Bill Clinton with the first members of his cabinet shortly after they were sworn in on January 22, 1993.

Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Treasury, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs. Each department is headed by a secretary whose appointment must be confirmed by a majority vote of the U.S. Senate before assuming office.

Presidents now make an effort to pick a cabinet that “looks like America.” This is a notable change from even the recent past. Except for one woman in the Eisenhower cabinet, initial Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nixon cabinets were all composed of white males. There was an African American in the Carter and Reagan cabinets; an African American and two Hispanic Americans in the George H.W. Bush cabinet. But it was not until Bill Clinton that only half of his department secretaries were of white European origin. Diversity as reflected in George W. Bush’s cabinet was African American (State, Education), Asian American (Labor, Transportation), Hispanic American (Housing and Urban Development), and Lebanese American (Energy).

Presidents can also give themselves some wiggle room by expanding the definition of who is a cabinet member, as when President Clinton added three women — as U.N. ambassador, as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, and as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Personnel matters make the biggest headlines, especially when a nomination has to be withdrawn because of something that the vetting (clearance process) discovers. Bill Clinton got an acceptable candidate for attorney general only on his third try, for instance. Other nominees are controversial and test the new president’s political skill at getting them confirmation by the Senate. When George H.W. Bush’s candidate for secretary of defense was rejected in 1989, it was the first time in history that an incoming president had been denied a cabinet member of his choice. These are embarrassments, and they are also looked upon as an early indicator of the next president’s judgment.

QUESTIONS OF ORGANIZATION

Beyond the headlines about people, the president-elect will be making major process decisions that are usually of little interest to the public. How does he organize his White House staff? Who reports directly to him, and who reports through his chief of staff? How much tension or conflict does he wish to incorporate into policy-formulating? What does he want the relationship to be between his White House staff and his cabinet? What new functions or offices does he wish to put in, and what offices might he wish to eliminate? Every president has some special cause that he wants to promote. Richard Nixon added a White House Office on Volunteerism; Bill Clinton added a White House Office for Women's



On January 21, 1981, at the U.S. Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany, a group of former American hostages, who had been released from captivity in Iran the day before, applaud when former President Jimmy Carter arrives to welcome them back.

Initiatives; and George W. Bush added an Office of Faith-Based and Community Outreach Initiatives.

Some of these little-noted decisions can have vast repercussions. President Dwight Eisenhower had created an elaborate national security system in the White House, but the incoming president, John Kennedy, thought it was burdensome and immediately disbanded it. Within months of taking office, however, there was the disastrous U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and

Kennedy was left without a properly functioning White House operation to rely on.

One can think of an incoming president's tasks as "The Three Ps"—Personnel, Process, Policy. He must review the policy commitments he made during the campaign. In what order should he try to honor them? Some will take time. But because President Franklin Roosevelt created a remarkable record in his first 100 days, all presidents know that "100 days" is a marker the media will use to judge them.

Moreover, because a president's popularity is measurably greatest at the moment he takes office, every president wants to "hit the ground running," as scholar James Pfiffner puts it. Sometimes, however, it doesn't work out this way. Bill Clinton's campaign had been based on

reviving the economy, yet during a transition press conference he accented a pledge to end the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces; this emotional issue — "gays in the military" — dominated his early months in office. As Pfiffner then noted, Clinton "hit the ground stumbling."

Some time during the transition, the president-elect is going to have to go to the White House to meet with the president. If they are of different political parties, this can be a delicate moment. Often the retiring president wants

to commit his successor to some action or policy. This is not usually in the incoming president's interest. Franklin Roosevelt rebuffed Herbert Hoover's effort to involve him in his welfare proposals. After all, in a few days Roosevelt could introduce his own proposals.

But there was a different sort of interaction between outgoing and incoming presidents in 1980. President Jimmy Carter was engaged in negotiations over the release of American hostages in Iran. President-elect Ronald

© AP Images

Reagan wanted these successfully concluded by the time he took office, and he let it be known that the Iranians would not get a better deal from him. The hostages were released moments after Reagan was inaugurated.

Another presidents' meeting had international ramifications. Between his defeat in November 1992 and leaving office in January 1993, President George H.W. Bush sent U.S. troops to Somalia, a humanitarian effort to help relieve the suffering of a bloody civil war. He sought and received the support of President-elect Clinton. According to Clinton's memoir, "At the time, Bush's national security advisor, General Brent Scowcroft, had told [Clinton aide] Sandy Berger they would be home before my inauguration." That was not to be. The Black Hawk Down disaster [when two American Black Hawk helicopters were shot down over Mogadishu, Somalia] occurred on October 3, 1993, and Clinton wrote, "The battle of Mogadishu haunted me. I thought I knew how President Kennedy felt after the Bay of Pigs."

SOMEWHAT LESSER ISSUES

Not all decisions the president-elect has to make during the transition are momentous. Some might remind him why he dreamed of one day living in the White House. There have been four presidential desks. Which one does he want the White House curator to move into the Oval Office? Or would he like to bring his own, as Lyndon Johnson did?

Most presidents have hung portraits of past presidents in the Oval Office. To whom should he give the place of honor over the white marble mantel? George Washington? Abraham Lincoln? Franklin Roosevelt?

And at noon on January 20, when he takes the oath of office standing on the U.S. Capitol's west front terrace facing the National Mall, an audience of thousands in front of him and millions more around the world watching on television, he will place his hand on the Bible, opened to a favorite passage, if he wishes. What shall it be?

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. Chosen by President Jimmy Carter.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Chosen by President Ronald Reagan. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

From the Inside

Governing Is Different From Campaigning

An Interview With Former Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley



In Los Angeles, California, in August 1999, then-Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley speaks at a news conference at which he and the president of the Spanish-language television network Univision unveiled public service announcements encouraging increased parental involvement in education.

A member of the cabinet under President Bill Clinton discusses the hectic days of transition and the process of stepping into a job as an agency head. Richard W. Riley spoke with eJournal USA's Charlene Porter.

Richard Riley served as U.S. Secretary of Education from 1993 to 2001. He was governor of South Carolina from 1979 to 1987, and remains an ambassador for improving education in that state, in the nation, and abroad.

Q: What's it like to get that phone call inviting you to join a new administration?

Riley: When it really started with me was a week or 10 days after Bill Clinton had been elected in 1992. I was out in Palo Alto, California, at a meeting of a commission on health care. We were working on the complex issues of health care and what ought to be done about them, and somebody leaned over to me and said, "Governor, you

have a phone call." I said, "How about getting a message? We're in the middle of some complicated issues here."

And they said, "Well, it's the president-elect." So I said, "Oh, well then, I'll take the call."

Q: You and Bill Clinton served as state governors at the same time, you in South Carolina, and he in Arkansas. Did that phone call arise from your shared history?

Riley: That's right. He was a close friend of mine. We were governors at about the same time in very similar states in size, makeup, and demographics.

I was on his National Executive Committee when he was elected. Then he was asking me to head up the transition for the selection of personnel at the sub-cabinet level, to chair the group that dealt with all those positions just below the cabinet secretaries, and still very important positions. I agreed to do that, so my wife and I moved to Washington and set up residence there.

I headed up what started as a small group but quickly became 250 or 300 people, setting up all the mechanisms for receiving résumés and recommendations, dividing them up according to departments, et cetera. We had a group of personnel professionals who would analyze all the applicants, for example, under the Department of Education. Some days, we were getting more than 3,000 résumés. We had about 50 lawyers, all volunteers, who vetted the applicants after we narrowed it down to those we were going to send to the president to be considered.

After about a month or six weeks of that, the president-elect asked me to start meeting with him on a number of things, then told me he wanted me to be in the cabinet and offered me the secretary of education job. Education was my first love, so I accepted.

Then I had the confusing situation of trying to oversee what was happening with sub-cabinet appointments and trying to set up my department, while I was also worrying about my own confirmation and the confirmations of the other key people in the Department of Education.

It was a fascinating time for me, and one that I thoroughly enjoyed, but I worked more than 14 or 15 hours a day. That period is kind of a fog to me.

Q: Do you think that's what Mr. Obama's people are going through now?

Riley: The experience for President-elect Obama and his staff is much more planned and in order.

Three candidates ran for president in 1992, and President Clinton won with less than 50 percent of the vote. He'd been fighting the campaign right to the last day, and so had very little time to begin the process of appointments ... prior to his election. When Senator Obama was elected, he already had people in place for a couple of months planning how they'd set up transition committees in the event he won. So they are more advanced than Clinton was.

It took Clinton some time to get settled in. He's a very deliberative person, and he wanted to be careful about it, so it was the end of December before Clinton appointed any cabinet members. That was behind the curve. We would have been better off if we had had some period of time to plan for that.

So the situation is a little bit different for President-elect Obama than it was for us.

Q: Did that "behind-the-curve" position act as a disadvantage as the months unfolded in the Clinton administration?

Riley: It was a disadvantage for a short period of time, but President Clinton really couldn't help it because the situation was so different from what you have now. President-elect Obama has all the Clinton administration experience to build on. He has pulled in many of Clinton's people to be his advisors, transition people, and cabinet members. When Bill Clinton came in, there had not been a Democratic administration since Jimmy Carter [1977-1981]. So over a period of a good many years, there were very few young Democrats who had had the chance to serve in government. By 1992, they were anxious to do so. Those people were pouring in during the Clinton years, so Obama has had the benefit of being able to draw on that large pool of experienced people.

Q: The law requires that nominees for the secretary of education position undergo a confirmation hearing before the U.S. Senate. How did that go for you?

Riley: It's always nerve-racking. You don't know what's going to be asked. You might say the wrong thing and make a big deal out of a small deal. Fortunately, my two South Carolina senators had considerable seniority, and both were in favor of my nomination. One of them was a leading Democrat, Fritz Hollings, and one of them was a leading Republican, Strom Thurmond. They both were very supportive. Senator Thurmond went with me to every meeting I had with Republican members of the committee that would review my confirmation. Senator Hollings did the same thing with the Democratic members. I received unanimous support for my nomination.

So while it's nerve-racking and you spend a lot of time preparing for it, thinking about all the different kinds of questions you may get, in the end, for me, it turned out to be a very enjoyable day once I got to the hearing itself, with the members quizzing me on my views on education.

Q: You certainly had an advantage with support from a senior member of the opposing political party. Isn't that unusual?

Riley: Yes. A lot of the people who were nominated by President Clinton had an experience where senators from the opposite party really quizzed them in a seriously negative way. That could make for a very long day.

The complexity of the hearing process was something I had to deal with in the transition job as leader for sub-cabinet personnel positions. We had some 250 positions to fill, and you'd get into some very, very complex situations.



Then-Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley is greeted by students at West Bolivar Elementary School in Rosedale, Mississippi, in August 2000, during a tour of the region designed to spark student and parental involvement in the education process.

For example, you'd have a candidate for a position in the Department of Justice or Education or whatever, a person who had an outstanding record, very positive references. Then, when the lawyers would go off and do the vetting, they'd come back and tell us this person had a drunk-driving charge 20 or so years ago after leaving a party, and that was on their record. So then you have this problem: Do you go forward with this outstanding person who has a perfectly clean record, other than this one thing? Is this enough to disqualify them from consideration for a presidential appointment?

Those were ticklish, sensitive situations.

They say it takes six to eight months to choose a college president in a national search. The sub-cabinet positions are the equivalent of college presidents, and a new president has 200 to 250 of them to fill. And you have to do that in a couple of months. It's a very trying, but important, situation. Everybody tries to do it the best way they can, and it's amazing how the American people come in and support those efforts.

Q: The first 100 days are always perceived as a critical period to set the tone of a presidency. But because of the crash in world markets that occurred in the last quarter of 2008, it's almost as if the Obama administration had been sworn in early as the markets sought some signs of what he is planning to do. How does that compare with your experience?

Riley: We were not in the middle of a crisis in the Clinton years. President-elect Obama will take office in the middle of an economic crisis, in the middle of two wars, and other critical things going on. So he has enormous pressure to get his secretary of state, his national security advisors, and his economic advisors in place quickly.

Q: What do you recall about the first 100 days of the Clinton administration and the urgency of that period?

Riley: You do have a period where you can really get some things done coming out of a campaign, but you have to learn that governing is quite different from campaigning. Some people who go into the presidency and bring people around them, they're really still campaigning. You need to develop this idea

that now you're the president of all the people.

When you're in a campaign, you're against the other side. That's the system. Both sides are in that political mode. There's nothing wrong with that, though we do have way too much negative campaigning going on now to suit me. But I was very proud of the Obama campaign, I thought he handled it in a very good way, and I think that's one of the reasons he did well.

But coming out of that campaign mode, you really need to have a change of mind. You're not *against* the other side at that point. You are *for* the country. You still have differences that develop. That's our system. You have partisan issues, and there's nothing wrong with that. But the way you approach all that is different once you are in office. Governing is different from campaigning.

From my observation, President-elect Obama understands that very well, and it looks to me like everything he's done and said is from a governing posture instead of a campaigning posture. I think that's very good with the crises he's facing.

Q: Let's go to the personal side of this experience for you. Joining an administration is more than a political or a career choice. There are also major lifestyle changes. For you it was a long-distance move to Washington from your home in Greenville, South Carolina, with all that entails, affecting you and your family. Was that a difficult transition for you?

Riley: It was not for me. I had a very understanding wife who enjoyed my government experiences as much as I did. She was a true partner in every sense of the word

who, I'm sad to say, died in March 2008. She had breast cancer for some 25 years. She developed cancer in the early 1980s when I was governor. With good treatment and taking good care of herself, she had a very good life for 25 more years. She was a great partner for me, and threw right in with whatever I had to do.

But it is a change of your style of life in every way. For example, anything you own — stocks, bonds, or whatever — you all but have to get rid of or put into some kind of trust. That's a hassle. But I didn't have that many assets to worry about, so I just transferred everything into holdings that were in no way controversial.

Also, you belong to all kinds of organizations. I used to say in speeches that I had to resign from everything but my church and my wife, and that was about the truth. With my interest in education, I was on a whole lot of boards and commissions. I was a trustee of the Duke University endowment, which I thoroughly enjoyed. But I had to resign from that. I had to resign from a number of other boards and commissions I was involved with in order to take the job as secretary of education. A nominee for that position has to resign from anything that has any relation to education whatsoever, and everything I belonged to did.

So you resign from everything you belong to. You sell everything you own except your home or automobile. You have to clear your holdings and your involvement to avoid any conflict of interest so you can go into this high position with the people's power and trust.

Q: Was it worth it?

Riley: Yes, it was worth it completely. It was a lot of trouble, and a lot of things to work out and do, but we thoroughly enjoyed it. Of course, the president asked me to stay on for another four years after he was reelected in 1996, so I was there for eight years. I went to Washington for two months, and I stayed for two months and eight years.

I enjoyed every minute of it and my wife loved it, too. We have enormously good friends from all over the world we met [in Washington], and, of course, any number of people involved in education that I met every day — the most interesting people in the country and the world. I ...

wouldn't take anything in the world for the experience. I will always be grateful to President Clinton for choosing me to be in that position.

Q: Your eight-year tenure was unusual. Generally most cabinet officers leave government after a few years of service. Why did you stay that long?

Riley: You may recall that presidents prior to Clinton had it in their plans to disband and eliminate a federal Department of Education. Because of that history, I saw when I took the job that many of the structural elements of the department were not up to date and were in serious need of improvement. I really threw myself into that and became very much involved — getting a new computer system, which was complex and complicated because it had to handle all the transactions between the department and universities, school districts, students, and what have you. All of that business was being conducted by a relatively small department. I pulled in the best people in the country to serve in the department, and I was very pleased with that.

We were just getting the department going well. The president offered me several other, higher positions, which I did not want to take because I was so much into the Department of Education, and that's where I wanted to stay. I had things going well at the end of four years, and I was excited about staying another four years.

Q: Are you offering any advice to the incoming Obama administration?

Riley: I'm serving as kind of an advisor to the education transition teams, and I've met with them and talked to them. There are a couple of different groups focused on the Department of Education, looking at the agency itself, its structure, and policies such as No Child Left Behind [an education initiative of the Bush administration]. I've talked to them and responded to questions about the agency, and they call periodically. I'm certainly available for anything they want to ask me, and I try to give them what I think is my best advice. ■

The opinions expressed in this interview do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Personnel Is Policy

An Interview With Stuart Holliday



Stuart Holliday briefs correspondents after a meeting of the U.N. Security Council in April 2005.

When a new president heads to Washington, he has campaign promises to fulfill and an agenda to begin. But first, he needs to hire a cadre of people who will help him undertake that work as part of his administration. A new president has discretion to fill some 8,000 to 10,000 positions out of an entire federal government workforce of almost 3 million people, including both civilian and military workers. So the newly elected leader must choose carefully those people who will help him fulfill his vision.

Stuart Holliday served as a special assistant to President George W. Bush as a member of the transition team and associate director of presidential personnel at the White House in 2000-2001. He served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations for special political affairs from 2003-2005. Today he is president of Meridian International Center, a Washington-based public diplomacy organization. He talked with eJournal USA associate editor Charlene Porter about the personnel selection process.

Question: A newly elected president has to get a new government up and running in a short time and needs to hire thousands of people. It's a big job that needs to be done very quickly. What were some of the first priorities when you stepped into this process?

Holliday: First of all, there are really two major tasks. One is to put into place the new administration, starting with the cabinet and the senior White House advisors. And the second is to ensure continuity of government, so that you have a smooth transition in the functions of government that have to operate on an ongoing basis. This is a very, important issue, especially in the post 9/11 [September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks] environment.

Q: Personnel are a key element to ensure that continuity is maintained?

Holliday: Exactly. In some positions, you have to ensure that you are ready to go on Day One with a slate of people that you want to call upon for public service.

Typically, new presidents have started with the cabinet, usually starting with the secretaries of State, Defense, and the Treasury as the senior cabinet posts. Then you move on through the transition with the rest of the cabinet.

Then the transition team works closely with the new incoming cabinet secretaries to select qualified people for the Senate-confirmed undersecretary and assistant secretary positions.

Q: This process can take a year or more fully to fill the thousands of jobs involved, but are you also saying that in an uncertain world, there are some chairs a new president doesn't want to leave empty for a day?

Holliday: That's correct, particularly in homeland security, defense, the intelligence community, and diplomatic postings. There are many such positions that must be very carefully transitioned.

Q: Another contributor to this publication writes that a new president must be mindful of "Three Ps"—personnel, process and policy. How do the personnel selected in the first few harried months of a transition influence what is to come for the next several years?

Holliday: There's an old adage that "personnel is policy" in the first year of an administration, and I think that is very true. Obviously, the incoming president has campaigned on a set of priorities and issues that he believes in and would like to see implemented. Number one is to understand what is the job to be done, and that drives the kinds of people you are looking for for these positions. The policies have to be implemented and refined along the way. Working with the new cabinet secretaries, a new president will outline an agenda for the first 100 days of office, things that he or she wants to achieve. Usually, a president won't have the whole team in place or even half the team during that first 100-day period. So a lot of it is working with the Congress and the White House staff to move his agenda forward.

Q: You served in the White House personnel office through 2001. Were most of those 8,000 to 10,000 jobs filled in that time?

Holliday: By the end of the first year, almost all the jobs had been filled, but the September 11 terrorist attacks accelerated confirmations. There had been a very slow process of confirmations throughout the spring and summer of 2001. The process of selections, background

investigations, and confirmations is one that can stretch out over several months. But by the end of the first year, all the Senate-confirmed jobs were filled.

Q: That's around 500 individuals at ranks that require confirmation by the U.S. Senate. So when those higher-level appointees are in place, don't they have a lot of discretion in filling lower-level positions, such that some of this hiring moves out of the White House?

Holliday: It's really a team effort, and obviously the people who are going to be on the cabinet secretary's team must be people that the cabinet secretary wants on the team. But it's very important that the White House retains a process that allows for the best quality people to be recruited and to serve in the administration overall. It would be a team effort.

Q: To what degree are politics involved in the decisions, satisfying this wing of the party with a certain



Health and Human Services Secretary-designate Tom Daschle arrives on Capitol Hill for his confirmation hearing.

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appointment, for example, or placating a disgruntled faction with another?

Holliday: Going back to the Founding Fathers, there's always been an issue in the balance between patronage and qualifications. In recent years, it's become very important that the highest quality people serve in positions of responsibility. There are always going to be recommendations on hiring from constituents, members of Congress, governors, and political campaigns. But they all have to be meritorious appointments and should be meritorious appointments at the end of the day. The best way the president can be served is by having qualified people in those jobs.



Retired General Colin Powell was the first member of George W. Bush's cabinet to be nominated by the then-president-elect in December 2000.

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Q: How do you ascertain that? What kind of questions do you ask?

Holliday: The best advice I ever received was that past performance is the predictor of future performance. In looking for qualified candidates, it's not just a matter of asking what would they do if they were in a certain circumstance. It becomes what have they done that is similar to what you are trying to achieve in that particular position. So first and foremost, merit is really assessed by what the candidate has done that lines up with what you hope to accomplish with that position.

The vetting process is something a little bit different. Are they people whose views are compatible with the overall agenda of the administration? Are they confirmable? Are they suitable in terms of temperament for the job? Did they have anything in their background that would disqualify them from serving? This is where the line is drawn between the White House personnel office and the White House counsel and the clearance process.

Q: Elaborate on that.

Holliday: There's a big legal team at the White House that works with the Office of Government Ethics and the cabinet agencies' legal departments to perform background investigations and prepare candidates for confirmation.

Q: So it becomes a two-step process. The personnel office identifies good candidates, and then passes them on to the legal team for further review?

Holliday: Exactly. Then there are very, very thorough financial divestiture requirements and ethical requirements that make coming into government an expensive proposition for certain folks. It is not a nonintrusive process by any means.

Q: Those candidates who must be confirmed by the Senate undergo a full hearing process with a bank of photographers in front of them, television lights, the whole treatment. How do you prepare somebody for that?

Holliday: The first thing is to make sure they understand the process and what they'll be going through. Then you prepare them for confirmation hearings and murder boards [mock hearings where candidates are confronted with challenging questions]. Making sure they are on top of their issues is very important. It's also very important for a candidate not to presume too much about their job prior to confirmation in terms of articulating what they are going to do.

The best thing a candidate can do when put up for Senate confirmation is to listen to the views of the committee that has jurisdiction over that agency. They are going to have a lot to say about the issues the candidate will be dealing with, and you don't want to start off your tenure with a dispute with your committee of jurisdiction.

Q: Are there any formulas involved in this process? For instance, would a president decide he wants X percentage of his people to have experience on Capitol Hill, another percentage with campaign experience?

Holliday: I think that in most cases, the incoming administration wants to cast a wide net nationally, look for talent wherever it is, and make sure there is a diversity of experience, ethnicity, background, and gender that would be representative of the country. As you get into specific jobs, that becomes more challenging because it's no longer a general question. It becomes a specific question of finding those individuals. There is general guidance in terms of the kinds of high-quality experience you're seeking, and then it has to be applied practically in the selection process. That can be a challenge, particularly in certain sectors.

People from Capitol Hill have policy expertise, and they are there in Washington and readily accessible. You can assume that those people are going to be natural candidates, so the challenge is to look beyond Washington. But inevitably people operating within the fabric of the government decision-making process have a head start in certain areas of expertise, especially those that require highly specialized attributes.



U.S. Air Force General Michael Hayden testifies before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee on his nomination to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency in May 2006.

© Ron Sachs/CNP/Corbis

that because these are absolutely the best candidates or because the new president has a history with them?

Holliday: If they've been successful as a governor, they believe that the team that's been around them has contributed to that success and they feel comfortable with those people around them. Again, what's important is that somebody who has performed at a certain level may not perform at the same capacity at a different level. There's not a general rule here. There are people who have been great mayors, fire chiefs, city council members, and county commissioners who have served with great distinction in Washington. There have also been people who have a rude awakening when the pressure of huge budgets, oversight, and the relations with Congress exceeds

Q: Historically, how much does a president's success through his term rest on how well these decisions are made, the quality of the picks that are made in these very early days?

Holliday: I think it is absolutely crucial. You can look at most of the issues that define a presidency and then walk them back to personnel decisions.

Q: That's a pretty sweeping statement.

Holliday: Yes. Handling a crisis well or poorly is a process of relying on the leadership of your administration and the persons you have put in these jobs. It may not seem a challenge today, but it could become so later. For example, when you look at the financial crisis [in the United States in late 2008], jobs at the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation didn't seem hugely high profile five or six years ago, but by the final months of 2008, those jobs and the people in them became very, very important.

Q: There is a tendency for some presidents to select people who come from where they come from, particularly those who rise to the presidency from governorships. They've worked in state capitals with a set of people, and then bring many of them to Washington. Do they do

anything they've experienced before.

Q: After a tough election there might be some nasty political grudges. How do the outgoing and incoming administrations have to set those aside and ensure a smooth process?

Holliday: During any transition, there are some critical issues that need to be handed off from one administration to the next. I would say that, regardless of party and partisanship, it's important that these two teams work together. It's just as important for an outgoing administration to finish strong and hand off a clear set of current, pending, hot issues to the new team. There's an obligation, a patriotic obligation, to do so. There's also an obligation of the new team to avoid the hubris that would make them dismiss what they are hearing from the outgoing administration.

In that sense, I think it's very important that people work together to ensure a smooth transition, not only on the personnel front, but on the issues that those people are working on. ■

The opinions expressed in this interview do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Inaugurations of the Past



The west front of the U.S. Capitol on January 20, 2001.

© AP Images

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

This is the oath taken by every president of the United States.



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After Andrew Jackson's inauguration on March 4, 1829, more than 20,000 well-wishers came to the White House to meet him.



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When William Henry Harrison was inaugurated on March 4, 1841, he declined the offer of a closed carriage and rode instead on horseback to the Capitol, where he delivered the longest inaugural address in U.S. history (more than an hour) in the bitter cold. He returned to the White House, again on horseback, and, according to a disputed legend, caught a cold that turned into pneumonia. Not disputed is the fact that he died one month later, on April 4, after the shortest presidency in U.S. history.



A crowd surrounds the east front of the U.S. Capitol, showing ongoing construction on the dome, during Abraham Lincoln's first inauguration, March 4, 1861.

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Calvin Coolidge is sworn in as the 30th president of the United States by Chief Justice William H. Taft, the only time in U.S. history when a former president administered the oath of office to an incoming one.

Outgoing President Herbert Hoover shakes hands with President-elect Franklin Delano Roosevelt in front of the White House on March 4, 1933. This was the last inauguration held in March. Since 1937, inaugurations have been held on January 20.



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President John F. Kennedy delivers his inaugural speech after taking the oath of office at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., on January 20, 1961. In this famous speech, he exhorted Americans to “ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”



Following John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office on the presidential plane returning to Washington, D.C. The woman in the foreground is Judge Sarah T. Hughes, the only woman to administer the oath of office. Johnson's wife, Lady Bird, is on his right, and Kennedy's widow, Jacqueline, is on his left.

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Newly sworn-in President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter made history by walking from the Capitol to the White House, January 20, 1977.



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On January 20, 1985, when a record freeze forced the ceremony indoors, President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office for his second term in a private White House ceremony conducted by Chief Justice Warren Burger, with First Lady Nancy Reagan holding the Bible. The ceremony was reenacted the following day in the Rotunda of the Capitol.

Did You Know?

- George Washington gave the shortest inaugural address in history (135 words).
- Chief Justice John Marshall presided over nine inaugurations, from John Adams (1797) to Andrew Jackson (1833).
- In 1865, Abraham Lincoln was the first president to include African Americans in his Inaugural Parade.
- In 1917, Woodrow Wilson was the first president to include women in his Inaugural Parade.
- Inauguration Day was changed to January 20, from March 4, in 1933 by the passage of the 20th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to be inaugurated in January.
- Harry Truman's 1949 inauguration was the first to be televised.
- Ronald Reagan's first inauguration (1981) was the warmest in history, and his second was the coldest.
- Robert Frost was the first poet to participate in an inauguration (1961, John F. Kennedy).
- Bill Clinton's 1997 inauguration was the first inauguration to be broadcast live over the Internet.
- When January 20 is on a Sunday, the president-elect usually takes the oath of office privately and then repeats the ceremony in public on Monday.
- More interesting facts can be found at <http://inaugural.senate.gov/history/factsandfirsts/index.cfm> and <http://www.inauguration.dc.gov/>.

Early Challenges for a New Administration

Kurt M. Campbell

While presidents-elect have routinely faced difficult challenges in the past, and though many have made mistakes, the American republic has always persevered.

*Kurt M. Campbell is chief executive officer of the Center for a New American Security. The author would like to thank Whitney Parker and George Mitchell for their research assistance on this article, which is drawn from the recently released book *Difficult Transitions: Foreign Policy Troubles at the Outset of Power* by Kurt Campbell and James B. Steinberg (Brookings Press, November 2008).*



President-elect Barack Obama (second from the left) stands with (from left to right) Vice President-elect Joe Biden, Secretary of State-designate Hillary Rodham Clinton, and National Security Advisor-designate Retired Marine General James Jones at a news conference to announce his national security team on December 1, 2008.

The handoff from an incumbent U.S. president to a president-elect offers an opportunity for change and reassessment, but it is also fraught with serious risks. When President-elect Barack Obama is sworn in on January 20, 2009, he will be confronted with ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a deepening financial crisis that threatens to destabilize the global economy, active nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, an increasingly tense relationship with Russia, and an ever more complex relationship with China, not to mention the specters of climate change, global poverty, and conflict in Africa.

While major national security trials are nothing new for presidential transitions, there are several reasons why this particular handoff poses unique risks. First, the immediacy and magnitude of threats in today's globalized world are much greater than at any point in our past — a biological attack or a stock market crash can have rippling effects around the globe in a matter of minutes. Second, increased international military and economic interdependence, coupled with growing transnational ties, means that it is virtually impossible for any one president to enter the White House with complete knowledge of every possible region of strategic importance. This transition is also likely to be the most complex in history. Barack Obama will take the reins of an expanded national security apparatus that now includes several new agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, which has never before experienced a political transition.

These and other factors, in combination, create complex difficulties for the incoming team. To manage them successfully, the Obama team will need to focus on three core transition issues: reassessing campaign commitments, choosing people and processes, and setting an agenda for the first 100 days of the new administration.

CAMPAIGN COMMITMENTS

One of the early challenges of presidential transitions arises well ahead of the November election, while



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South Korean Army soldiers standing guard at Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which separates North and South Korea, symbolize the ongoing tension on the Korean peninsula, a serious foreign policy challenge for the new administration.

candidates are still campaigning for the presidency. Hastily made campaign commitments are a frequent cause of presidential headaches once candidates reach the White House.

Presidents-elect may have to reassess promises made on the campaign trail after receiving top-level national security briefings for the first time. If a new president fails to follow through on a commitment, he may appear weak, thus damaging his credibility. But sticking by an imprudent campaign commitment invalidated by newly acquired information could risk much more dire consequences.

Unfortunately, the pressures of the campaigning process virtually ensure that candidates will make at least some rhetorical missteps. Although making specific commitments during the campaign may be necessary for securing the support needed to win the White House, once elected, the new president will need not only the support of key domestic constituencies, but also the cooperation of foreign partners. The myriad policy proposals and position checklists generated by an extensive network of think tanks are occasionally helpful, but they also run the risk of trapping candidates into policy positions that may later prove ill-considered.

PEOPLE AND PROCESS

A second core challenge in foreign policy transitions involves picking the right people and setting up the best processes for decision making and governance. Presidents-elect could use the time ahead of the election to vet potential appointees for key cabinet posts. However, for a variety of reasons, candidates usually decide against this approach. Superstition, not wanting to “jinx” the election, is one reason, but candidates have a number of pressing priorities during a campaign, and they may want to avoid alienating key supporters by failing to submit their names for consideration.

Potential appointees generally fall into one of four categories — holdovers, loyalists or campaign policy advisors, all-stars, and worthies — each of which has benefits and drawbacks. Holdovers from the current administration can provide continuity and institutional memory for the new team, but with uncertain loyalty. Loyalists have demonstrated their commitment to the new leadership, but pose risks associated with “groupthink”



Another thorny issue is Iran. Here, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left) inaugurates a heavy-water nuclear facility in the central Iranian town of Arak. Tehran says it is for peaceful purposes, but Western countries fear it could eventually be used to develop a nuclear bomb.

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a fine line, blending boldness and caution, choosing his battles carefully.

Early failures, such as President Bill Clinton’s infamous initiative on gays in the military, which severely strained his relations with the Department of Defense, can prevent a new leader from building momentum toward solving the major policy challenges.

New presidents must also attenuate their urge to abandon the outgoing administration’s policies wholesale — a phenomenon labeled by some observers as the “ABC,” or “Anything But Clinton,” syndrome that characterized President George W. Bush’s first term in office.

ADVICE ABOUT TRANSITIONS

During the campaign process, presidential candidates must, first, remember to be judicious in making promises and to be cognizant that new information may demand a change of opinion once in office. Second, candidates should avoid answering hypothetical questions. Third, candidates and their teams should use the campaign period to learn about and

when it comes time for decision making. All-stars offer instant credibility for the administration in specific domains, but they may not be compatible with the president’s personal leadership style. Worthies — those with high public profiles, often from the U.S. Congress — offer credibility but may not bring significant national security experience to the table.

Making choices about people and processes extends to the office of the vice president as well. And all of these considerations must be made in view of the new administration’s still-evolving policy agenda.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

The new president is faced with a troubling paradox after the inaugural ball comes to a close — he is at the height of his popularity precisely when his administrative capacity is at its weakest. The new president must walk

reflect upon the candidates’ governing and management styles. These lessons will come in handy when determining the composition of the teams. It’s also possible to get a head start on selecting key officials without appearing overconfident. Further, during the campaign, the candidates can establish informal and formal advisory groups that later transform into transition and governing teams — as both Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush effectively did.

During the official transition period itself — the days between election and inauguration — the president-elect should make personnel decisions first, while keeping sight of the overall composition of the team. Next, the president-elect should develop decision-making procedures based upon the people and personalities who will make up the new administration. Personalities and informal relationships will affect the success of the processes and procedures that ultimately prevail. The team should guard

against groupthink (that is, not appoint an abundance of loyalists at the expense of holdovers, worthies, and all-stars), but realize that too much diversity can paralyze decision making and inhibit strong working relationships.

Once in office and firmly in control, the president should move to resolve old disputes quickly and efficiently, trying to build a momentum of small victories to demonstrate early progress. The new president should try to defer difficult and complex issues until he can adjust to unforeseen governing realities. Although presidential power is often at its weakest during the first 100 days, substantial progress is still possible if the so-called honeymoon period can be leveraged effectively. Initial steps can be taken to bridge a potentially polarized national security community early on in the administration.

The president-elect should enter the White House with an effective team already in place and be prepared to manage unanticipated crises at the outset. Moreover, the new president should engage with the legislative branch of the government early and often. The George W. Bush executive team got off on the wrong foot with Congress by setting up a national security process heavily focused on the executive branch of the government, greatly straining relations with party allies in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

DANGERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The history of the 11 U.S. presidential transitions since World War II is a cautionary tale replete with dangers as well as opportunities. There are many unique features associated with the American system

of government: its delicate balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the role political appointees play in the executive branch; and a presidential transition process that is very different and much more prolonged and elaborate than the Westminster-style parliamentary systems found in other nations.

And in a complex world with myriad threats, urgent information flows, and increasingly vast government bureaucracies, American presidential transitions are viewed with both hope and trepidation. The trepidation reflects more than simple concerns over possible policy departures; it also reflects an anxiety over the potential for missteps and mix-ups that have rattled presidential transitions in the past.

Yet despite the many challenges and occasional blunders over the centuries, presidential transitions in the United States have remained remarkably orderly and peaceful. Respect for the U.S. Constitution, the rule of law, the electoral process, and the institution of the presidency has always prevailed, even despite occasional setbacks. While presidents-elect have routinely faced difficult challenges in the past, and though many have made mistakes, the American republic has always persevered. ■

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The President and the Press

Martha Joynt Kumar



President Dwight D. Eisenhower answers a question at a press conference in Washington, D.C., in 1959. Press secretary James Hagerty is seated next to the president.

Every U.S. president needs a White House team aware of the rhythms of the relationship between the president and the press, as well as a staff with a sense of how to take advantage of them. The need for good press relations is particularly acute during a time of transition.

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“I’m glad we released the tape of the statement to radio, TV, and newsreels. To hell with slanted reporters; we’ll go directly to the people who can hear exactly what Pres [Eisenhower] said without reading warped and slanted stories,” said James Hagerty, President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s press secretary, on their release of a tape of a presidential press conference.

The urge to use news organizations to establish a direct and unfettered connection with the public has been a constant theme in presidential communications, as has complaining about their nemesis, the press. President George W. Bush was not in office two months when he began complaining about “the filter.” In a speech on March 23, 2001, in Portland, Oregon, Bush observed: “I found it’s more effective for me to kind of get out of the Nation’s Capital and explain my budget face to face with folks, than to rely upon the filter to do so. Sometimes the facts get kind of distorted. ... So let me explain my budget, if you don’t mind, and what we intend to do with money if we’re able to bring fiscal sanity to the Nation’s Capital.” Like his predecessors, Bush expressed his frustration with the press for not covering him and his programs as he would like both to be portrayed.

While presidents may complain about the press, they soon find out that news organizations are an important part of the presidential governing landscape. James Hagerty railed about reporters, but he dealt with them all



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Veteran White House correspondent Helen Thomas (center), who has covered every president since John F. Kennedy, takes her seat in the front row of the renovated James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in July 2007.

the same, briefing them in his office twice a day, allowing them walk-in access to him throughout the day, making sure they were included in presidential events and trips with prime spots to view and hear the president, and generally meeting their coverage and information needs. Hagerty knew something that other White House staff and their presidents have learned about White House communications. It is a relationship with tension, but it also is a relationship that benefits presidents. The public wants to know what a president is doing and planning. News organizations provide that information to them.

Three elements of the relationship between the White House and the press tell us a great deal about how it operates from one administration to the next. First, the relationship is a cooperative one. There may be tension between the two, but on a daily basis each has a stake in working effectively with the other. Second, White House communications operations are continuing, with the central publicity offices remaining from one administration to the next and with ground rules that apply across administrations. The rules governing the relationship appear simple and timeless — tell the truth, give out bad news with your explanation of it — but so too are the temptations of those inside the White House not to follow along. That is one of the factors that makes the job of presidential press secretary so difficult. Third, news organizations are the primary vehicle presidents and their surrogates use to get their considerable number of

speeches, interviews with the press, and statements to the public. Yet they do not control the relationship because they need to respond to the queries posed by reporters.

THE ELEMENT OF COOPERATION

In order to make the most effective use of their relationship with news organizations, presidents and their staffs need to cooperate with the reporters who cover them. How else does a president get “the facts” to the public on a regular basis except through news organizations?

On a daily basis, there are some 100 print, wire, television, and radio reporters, photographers, producers, and camera crew members stationed at the White House ready to send out images of the president to the public and write about him and his administration. As dissatisfied as they get with reporters, presidents and their staffs continue to have reporters in the West Wing of the White House as they have since 1902, when this annex was first occupied. Cooperation includes the White House’s providing reporters with information about the president and his programs — and news organizations using much of what they receive in one form or another. The tension in their relationship comes when the White House disagrees with what news organizations report and what reporters include in their stories.

As expensive as it is for news organizations to maintain a presence at the White House, they have done so since at least 1896, when several newspapers stationed correspondents at a table outside the office of the president’s secretary, analogous to today’s White House chief of staff. Then and now, news organizations wanted their reporters close to the center of news so their organization could be the first to deliver it.

Reporters have never given up their close access to presidential news. Today, the major television networks have a manicured space on the West Wing driveway on the north side of the White House where they do live reporting. Visiting television reporters use it as well. The White House and news organizations work to maintain the space because each knows that space works for news organizations, just as does the newly renovated White House Press Room. News organizations and the government together spent \$8 million for the renovation, with \$2 million of it paid by the press.



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President Bill Clinton leaves a news conference in the East Room of the White House in January 1997. Presidents interact with the media in a number of locations.

A HISTORY OF CONTINUITY

The press secretary is the presidential staff position with the longest history. Each of the 13 presidents who have served since 1929 has had a presidential assistant assigned to work on press matters. The people holding the position manage the president's relationship with the press and provide information to reporters according to the wishes of the chief executive and his staff.

In 1969, President Richard Nixon added a second element to the White House communications orbit: the Office of Communications. That office, too, has survived to the present. It traditionally handles long-range communications planning and generates plans to sell presidential programs to the public and others who support the president's needs, while the press secretary and his or her staff concentrate instead on providing information on a daily basis to reporters who regularly cover the president. The longevity of these offices through

Democratic and Republican administrations reflects the continuing needs they serve.

The ground rules that govern the relationship between reporters and officials are continuing as well. Even the arrangements of what is on the record, off the record, and "on background" remain pretty much the same. On-the-record information is public, and reporters can use it with the name of the source. Today, most presidential information is on the record. Background information means a news source, such as a White House staff member, tells a reporter something he or she may report, but not with the person's name. Thus, a reporter might write, "A senior White House official said today ..." Off the record means reporters cannot publicly use the information in any way, though, from a practical standpoint, they can see if they can find the same information through someone who will give it to them on the record or on background.



President George W. Bush holds a press conference in the White House Rose Garden in September 2006.

Continuing, too, are the operating publicity principles that benefit a president and his administration. President Gerald Ford's press secretary, Ron Nessen, laid out those principles spanning generations and applying to all communications officials. "I think most press secretaries, no matter what their background is, come to understand that the same set of rules apply year after year, administration after administration: Tell the truth, don't lie, don't cover up, put out the bad news yourself, put it out as soon as possible, put your own explanation on it, all those things."

At the same time, it is not always easy for the press officials to meet those guidelines. As Nessen also noted, "... a lot of times, other members of the staff don't want to do that; they don't understand it." In the George W. Bush White House, we saw how difficult it was for Press Secretary Scott McClellan to get accurate information from senior-level White House officials, and his subsequent loss of credibility. This same scenario also occurred in earlier administrations, with the same result: A new person comes in as press secretary.

NEWS ORGANIZATIONS: UNCONTROLLED VEHICLES

A president has a great stake in his relationship with news organizations because he needs public understanding in order to govern. To create programs and to fund them, the president needs the agreement of the Congress. His is a position where he shares power more than he exercises it alone. And that is where news organizations come in: They are his vehicle to the public whose support he needs to convince Congress to enact his programs.

The American president speaks from the White House and from around the country and the world. News organizations are with him wherever he goes, sending out wire copy, writing newspaper articles, and broadcasting on radio and television what he says. One can gauge the need a president has for news organizations by the frequency of his public speeches and remarks. President George W. Bush has delivered an average of 1.6 speeches or remarks a day during a six-day week, while the comparable number for President Bill Clinton was 1.8. In speeches big and small, a president today can expect to speak approximately

500 times a year, especially in his first year in office. Clinton spoke 602 times in 1993, his first year in office, and Bush delivered 508 speeches and remarks in 2001.

The price for using news organizations as a vehicle to deliver a president's words to the public is providing information to those organizations and their reporters, particularly those assigned to the White House. They seek information in addition to what the president and his staff want to provide; his words make up only part of their news stories. They want answers to their questions about the president's motives, alternative plans, and priorities.

On a daily basis, reporters can get information from the president's surrogates, most often from his press secretary. However, on a regular basis, reporters need to get answers from the president himself. While American presidents have answered reporters' questions in the open forum of the press conference since 1913, such sessions were originally on an off-the-record basis. They have been on the record and available for television since January 1955, when President Eisenhower held the first such session.

Today, presidents meet with reporters in three venues. First, there are the press conferences in which the president meets reporters in an open session to answer their questions for about half an hour. Sometimes a foreign leader accompanies the president, and sometimes he is alone facing the press. In addition, chief executives respond to reporters on a regular basis in short question-and-answer sessions in the Oval Office and other locations around the White House, including the Rose Garden outside of the Oval Office. Further, presidents will do interviews with reporters from foreign countries, as well as with those representing domestic news organizations. Before a president travels abroad, for example, he will

usually have interviews with reporters representing news organizations from the country to which he is traveling. He does those sessions in order to inform the public there about his hopes for the trip.

When press conferences, question-and-answer sessions, and interviews are counted together, presidents meet frequently in sessions that they only partially control. Presidents do not have to answer questions, but they risk criticism if they do not. President Clinton responded to reporters' queries 332 times during his first year in office, while President Bush had 211 such sessions during his first year. After his first year, Bush did not respond to reporters' queries more than 150 times in any of the remaining seven years, and Clinton had 275 or fewer such sessions in each of his remaining seven years. In all of these sessions, presidents risk making mistakes, something they do not like to do and will avoid if they believe they can.

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

When Barack Obama comes into office, he will need a White House team aware of the rhythms of the relationship between the president and the press — and a staff with a sense of how to take advantage of them. Considering all of the public presentations a president makes today and with the many times he answers questions from reporters, the chief executive needs a team in place that can help him get through to the public with his goals and programs. Effective leadership requires it. ■

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For the Record

Terry Good



Former President George H.W. Bush (left), President-elect Barack Obama, President George W. Bush, and former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter discussed challenges and shared insights in a meeting at the White House on January 7, 2009.

© AP Images

“You come in with nothing. You leave with nothing.” This is the simple guidance offered to White House staffers upon their departure to explain that the Presidential Records Act of 1978 established government ownership of all White House records. The Office of Records Management is charged with the vital responsibility of ensuring transparency — that is, overseeing the transfer of the records to the National Archives and subsequently to the president’s library.

Terry Good was detailed to the White House from the National Archives in January 1969 as a member of a team to begin preparations for Richard M. Nixon’s Presidential Library. Following President Nixon’s resignation, Good joined the White House Office of Records Management and in October 1988 became its director, the position he held until retiring in July 2004. He and his wife, Evelyn, now live in Ohio.

January 20th, 11:55 A.M.
Whew! Finally. We did it. Another transition. Another massive emptying of the White House complex. Of people. Of papers. Of electronic records. And all before 12:00 noon.

In my office, I collapse onto the sofa, exhausted and sleepy, having been here all night, catching only a catnap on occasion, having continued to make last-minute sweeps of the White House complex (the West Wing, the East Wing, the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the New Executive Office Building, and several other facilities), looking for those files, those documents, that inevitably, somehow, were overlooked in cleaning out the offices. I turn on the TV and watch the inauguration ceremony on Capitol Hill while sipping a cup of cold coffee and finishing a stale doughnut.

But I can’t rest long. I need to make another sweep of the West Wing. In five minutes, the advance guard of the new presidential administration is due to enter the gates.



White House Photo/Joyce Boghosian

President George W. Bush and Records Management Director Terry Good in the Oval Office.

The job is only half done. I've said my goodbyes to the outgoing administration, people I came to know, to respect, to like. Four years or eight years. It seems so short a time in retrospect. But there is little time to reminisce. The next phase of the transition is about to begin. I must be prepared to greet the newcomers with a smile and an offer to support them with as much dedication and enthusiasm as I exhibited to their predecessors, party politics notwithstanding.

And I will — and so will my staff in the Office of Records Management (ORM) — for we are part of the White House staff that stays on from administration to administration. We are among the White House nonpartisan “career” employees who serve “the office not the man.”

In those few moments I think about what is in store for the incoming administration and for my office. I take the liberty of fast-forwarding through the life cycle of the next four or eight years.

You've Got Mail!

In a matter of days, an avalanche of mail will descend upon the newcomers. It will be the first wave. They will be overwhelmed. Yes, they had been forewarned, but it will still be a shock, a staggering number of boxes of

incoming mail from the general public that has been accumulating in the weeks since Election Day. Tables will need to be set up in the hallways of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building adjacent to the White House. Over time, they will discover that reading 200 letters a day is about average. They will code each letter for further action: a response; a referral to an agency for action; or in some instances, no action. The incoming high volume, however, will continue throughout the administration.

Surprisingly, the processing task is not devoid of levity. The American people possess a creativity that surpasses belief. Almost unimaginable formats have been — and will be — employed to communicate with the presidents: cans, pieces of wood, zucchinis, and coconuts exemplify the variety of choices.

Courtesy William J. Clinton Presidential Library



President Bill Clinton visits Terry Good in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Those of us
in the Office of

Records Management will be prepared to offer our advice on how to handle this mail. This will be our first test, our first opportunity. We must be able to convince the new administration that the vast majority of this mail, once read and processed, need not be kept for more than several months. If we can convince them that these communications are expendable, not only will storage space requirements be reduced, but we will also greatly reduce the logistical challenges facing us when we once again come face-to-face with our greatest nemesis, the next transition. Yes, planning for the transition starts that early.

Fortunately, the e-mail flood, initially so overwhelming, will no longer create the crises that arose in the past when this new technology came of age. In volume it will be staggering, but processing it will be fairly routine. The next wave, while not so large, will soon arrive. Within days, ORM's phones will begin to ring with requests for files on the people who have written in or for background on government policies that the new administration is now wrestling with. Our response will be

always the same, always shocking and disappointing: Our files are empty. All the information, the papers, and the electronic records are gone. You are going to have to start from scratch. The agencies within the executive branch of the government can assist. They have the program responsibilities and the knowledge. In short order, the new administration will gain its footing and the wheels of government will begin to turn, quickly getting up to speed.

Throughout the White House complex, another wave will begin to build in the ensuing weeks. Staff assignments and responsibilities will require large quantities of information. In every office, the papers, documents, and books will flood in, far more than the majority of the new staff will have ever before encountered. The influx will be relentless and tsunamic in volume. Initially, they will try to cope by requesting more filing cabinets and shelving. Within weeks, all the available space within each office will disappear. Worse, the papers, documents, and books will mount up, pile up, in the file cabinets, on the shelves, the desks, the chairs, the tables, the sofas, and finally on the floors — in rare instances, to a point where there will be literally only paths from the door to the desk, perhaps once again to a point where, as happened on one occasion, only the threat of a visit by the fire marshal will bring some order and cleanup to the office.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE

By this time, some of the administrative staff will be overwhelmed and discouraged. Many will be unprepared for this daunting challenge, few will have had previous experience with an office that is so busy, so burdened, so in need of the quick turnaround times that are part and parcel of a White House office. Additional staff will not be an option. Fearing criticism for an alleged “bloated” White House staff, the new administration must make do with a lean staff partially supported by volunteers and interns. It will not be easy.

It will not surprise the Office of Records Management. In every administration, the challenge of organizing the information, whatever its format, has been a matter of low priority initially. Rarely do the newcomers sufficiently anticipate the crucial nature of this component of government business or its volume. The staff, of necessity, must focus on national and world events that dwarf such mundane tasks as where to put a document. History will repeat itself.

The Office of Records Management, an office they didn't know existed, will soon become a godsend. The ORM records managers will be able to begin to bring some relief to the buildup of paper within the offices. In some instances, the suggestions will include filing arrangements. In many cases, it will be a matter of encouraging the staff to inventory and box up those materials that are not of immediate use. These boxed records can then be transferred to ORM's custody, where the inventories will be optically scanned into the ORM database and the boxes will be numbered and shelved — and available within the hour should any of them need to be returned. While ORM doesn't mention it, this is really another piece of the first phase of the “end of administration” process, of preparing to move the administration out at the end of four or eight years. Files that are inventoried and boxed will be ready for transfer to the National Archives and Records Administration when the administration ends. One box at a time will present little challenge over the span of four or eight years, growing incrementally to at least 12,000 at the end of four years, at least 20,000 over eight years.

Equally important, perhaps even more important, the Office of Records Management sees this as the first phase of writing the history of this administration. Documents are witnesses: They talk. Organized documents tell stories. To the extent that ORM can convince the staffs to create and maintain organized files, to that extent can the history of the administration be better understood, better written, and better told, first by the president when writing his memoirs, later by historians and others when attempting to emphasize and interpret selected events and policies.

And so over time, ORM's reputation will spread, either because staff offices feel rescued in their struggle to avoid sinking amid the growing quicksand of paper, or because ORM will, in fact, be able to quickly respond to their requests for information or the return of their boxed and stored files.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

With the passage of weeks, months, and years, as the administration ages and matures, ORM's relationship with the political staff will grow accordingly. Acquaintances inevitably will become friends, and departures, whether during or at the end of an administration, will be occasions for genuine sadness. The analogy is stretched, but there is a bit of similarity in the White House



© AP Images

The National Archives preserves all presidential records — written, printed, electronic, and recorded. Here, an archivist listens online to newly released tape recordings from the Nixon White House at the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California, in December 2008.

residence, belongs to the American people, and everything should be done to ensure that it is left as a guest would leave the home of a host — in as good a condition, and perhaps better, than when entered. In most cases this attitude will prevail.

As for the records, guidelines and deadlines will also be issued. The Office of Records Management will receive the green light to survey all the offices within the White House to ascertain how many boxes to distribute to the staff for the remaining files.

Staff departures will commence, bringing to a head another issue —

experience to being aboard a ship attempting to navigate treacherous waters. Everyone, side-by-side, will pull equally on their oar to see that the “ship of state” passes safely through unnumbered rapids, uncharted channels, and violent maelstroms to reach the harbor. Differences between political and career staff will slip into the background. Bonds will develop.

As the administration enters its last year, ORM will begin — quietly and softly at first — to mention more frequently the advantage and the need for the staff to inventory and box up the files in their offices. Most of the staff will realize this and conscientiously strive to put their “houses in order” for posterity, for “their” president and for themselves.

The situation will not be nearly so calm if the incumbent president’s re-election bid fails. Everything will telescope into a matter of weeks from that first week in November to January 20th. The White House complex will morph into a huge mortuary suffering through an extended wake.

Fortunately, the transition process, once set in motion, will follow a fairly well-worn path. Guidelines will be issued to the staff to continue to carry out their responsibilities while preparing to leave. There is an understanding that the White House complex, like the

ownership of the files.

Invariably some staff members will come to believe that their office files are their personal files. Prior to the enactment of the Presidential Records Act (PRA) of 1978, these papers and all others within the White House were historically considered the property of the president, who could do with them whatever he wished. No longer. The PRA has established government ownership of the records. With the exception of certain “political” records, neither the president nor the staff has a claim to them, whether originals or copies. They can’t leave the White House except to be transferred to the National Archives and subsequently to the president’s library. Being on the front lines of this matter, ORM struggles to explain this law, knowing from experience that it will often receive a cool reception. Offering up a simple guideline suffices in many instances: “You come in with nothing. You leave with nothing.”

THE PACE QUICKENS

This ownership question, however, doesn’t equal in importance the bigger question of boxing and moving the records out of the complex. That task, understandably, takes center stage. Very soon after the election, the



Courtesy William J. Clinton Presidential Library

A National Archives official inventories pallets of boxes in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building being prepared to be moved to the Archives.

National Archives and the Department of Defense will arrive to assist. The pace will quickly increase, reaching almost a fever pitch as the weeks of November and December pass.

Calls will begin to come in informing ORM that inventoried boxes are ready to be picked up. Staging areas will be set aside for stacking boxes on pallets, strapping them down, and finally wrapping the entire load with a plastic covering known as shrink wrapping. Forklifts will move them into semi-trailers on the driveway between the West Wing and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Once filled, the loads will be transported to off-site locations. The logistics will be daunting. Unfortunately, files that will be moved off site will not be off-limits. They will still be active files, should the staff need them. Retrieving a particular box will become a nightmarish endeavor. It will happen. And, yes, it will be the box on the bottom of the stack on the bottom pallet in the far corner of the staging area.

This task will take on a certain heart-in-the-throat drama in other ways also. The electronic database, by then a huge accumulation of information, will need to be downloaded, duplicated, and transferred, like everything else, to the custody of the National Archives. The process will be, as always, extremely involved. For weeks the National Archives computer technicians will work with their White House counterparts to facilitate this

mammoth task. After creating a copy, there will follow a seemingly unending series of tests to make absolutely certain that every bit and byte of all the data have been copied and can be retrieved. For this duplicate database to fail would break too many hearts and careers; to re-create it would break too many budgets, if it could be done at all. There is no margin for error. There will be celebrations when the last test query is run and the results match perfectly those of the query of the original database. Then and only then can the White House computer center finally begin to remove all of that data and begin to prepare

to support the new administration.

Yet even this decision and its timing will require careful thought, for there are serious ramifications to severing this umbilical cord. Yes, from that point on to the end of the administration, the duplicate database can support ORM's needs to provide information to the White House. If only that were all there was to consider.

Unfortunately, there is another side to that coin. The Office of Records Management will no longer be able to enter data into either the old or the new database. The computerized record of this administration will be finished, closed. With that act, the nature of the computerized records of this administration will change, will become an archival database. In a sense, without the umbilical cord, the body will die. Thus, the timing of this surgery will present ORM with a wrenching tug-of-war between its desire to clear the decks to prepare for the new administration and its desire to enter as much data as possible for the outgoing administration. The decision will not be easy.

Meanwhile, another factor will hover over the playing field, causing worried glances at the thermometer and the sky. Mother Nature may frown or smile on this effort, coming as it does between November and February. At best, one will hope for above-freezing temperatures. Rain, sleet, and snow will be unwelcome guests: Coupled with subfreezing weather, they will become something far



Then-President Bill Clinton and former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter join former President George H.W. Bush at the dedication ceremony of the George Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas, in November 1997. By law, presidential records are preserved by the National Archives for transfer to the presidential libraries.

© AP Images

them to the National Archives for deposit in the appropriate presidential library.

HAIL AND FAREWELL

Looking at the clock, it is now 12:15. I must make another visit to the West Wing from my office in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. As I approach the door to the West Wing, I encounter a scene that will remain indelibly imprinted in my memory.

Several stragglers are just leaving the West Wing basement entrance as several members of the new administration are

worse, playing havoc with the movement and the timing of the semi-trailer trucks and forklifts. Hours and days of good weather will become precious commodities.

It won't stop there. Looming over all of this will be the concern that January 19 will find material still in various stages of removal within parts of the White House complex. It has happened. Usually, by the morning of January 20, nothing will move: not trucks, not boxes. Only a very limited number of personnel may enter the complex. Everything will enter a "lock-down" phase in preparation for the Inaugural Parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. What hasn't left the White House complex will simply be held until the next day. As complicated as it will become, everyone will understand and will accept the situation. There are priorities after all. In fact, it is not as though any documents not gathered up at this point will never be accessioned into the presidential library. Weeks and months into the new administration, overlooked files will surface, from closets, stored file cabinets, and unoccupied desks. When notified, ORM will transfer

approaching. Momentarily everyone pauses, not certain what protocol requires in this chance meeting. Then tentatively, they shake hands, with fresh smiles on the faces of two, worn smiles on the other two.

"Hello."

"Good afternoon."

Rising to the occasion, one departee can't let the moment pass without a slight wink to partisanship, asking softly and with a smile, "Please take care of the place ... we'll be back in four years."

The newcomers return the smile, and one responds in a tone of voice that conveys understanding: "Okay."

And then they part to go their separate ways. Handshakes, but no fisticuffs. No barricades. No guns.

And so one cycle ends. Another begins. American democracy in action. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Second-Term Transitions

John Burke



President Dwight Eisenhower confers with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who served from January 26, 1953, until April 22, 1959, only one month before his death. Many members of Eisenhower's cabinet continued to serve during his second term.

The odds are fairly high that a sitting president who is eligible for a second term will need to prepare for such an experience. Second terms present new challenges. These are not insurmountable, and some presidents have done better than others. As with a successful first term, effective transition planning is needed.

*John P. Burke, a professor at the University of Vermont, specializes in American politics, the American presidency, and ethics and public affairs. He has published a number of articles on presidential transitions and two books: *Becoming President: The Bush Transition 2000-2003* and *Presidential Transitions: From Politics to Practice*, which focuses on the Carter, Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton transitions and early presidencies.*

While much attention has focused on the transition to office of newly elected presidents, sitting presidents who have been successful in gaining re-election face an equally consequential challenge in preparing for a second term. Of the 19 U.S. presidents who have served since 1900, eight have been re-elected (including William McKinley and Richard M. Nixon, who did not serve out their full second terms). In addition, four vice presidents who assumed the presidency were successful in gaining election in their own right (Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson). So the odds are fairly high that a sitting president, eligible to serve another term, will need to prepare for a new term in office.

In some sense, second-term transitions present a less daunting challenge. Sitting presidents do not face the

difficulty of hurriedly trying to fill key White House, cabinet, and sub-cabinet positions in the roughly 75 days from Election Day in November to Inauguration Day on January 20. The situation with respect to departments and agencies is especially advantageous. Present appointees can stay on their jobs if the president so prefers, or they can be replaced in a time frame of the president's choosing. This is no small advantage. Most importantly, there is no requirement that cabinet and sub-cabinet members be reconfirmed by the U.S. Senate.

By contrast, absent the "shadow government" of many parliamentary systems, newly elected presidents must move very quickly in selecting and then nominating members of the cabinet. Fortunately, the Senate usually acts speedily to confirm those nominees. Filling sub-cabinet positions is more problematic: The time from presidential selection to confirmation now averages some eight months. Thus, while a new administration is not fully staffed for some considerable length of time, a sitting president can rely on fuller horsepower in the early months of a second term.

Less than a handful of White House staff positions require Senate confirmation, yet here, too, sitting presidents seem advantaged. They do not face the time constraint of quickly filling the some 1,500 to 2,000 positions that are now part of the Executive Office of the President. Skilled and valued staff members can be retained or promoted. Most importantly, there is not the steep learning curve that the fresh staff of a newly elected presidency generally faces. There is built-in institutional memory from one term to the next that is generally absent when the presidency changes hands.

DIFFERING PATTERNS

Given the greater latitude in making personnel changes and absent the press of time, it is not surprising that sitting presidents have varied considerably in what they have done in their transitions to second term. For Dwight D. Eisenhower, who served two terms as president — from 1953 to 1961 — continuity was the order of the day. No major changes took place at the top of the White House staff at the beginning of Eisenhower's second term (save for the return of Robert Cutler as national security advisor). Three of the then 10 cabinet members would eventually leave, although that process occurred much later in 1957.

Following his 1972 election for a second term, Richard Nixon demanded the resignation of every political appointee in his administration; change in the cabinet was significant, the staff less so. Of the then 11 cabinet slots, eight were filled with new members; by the end of the year, as the Watergate scandal took its toll, two more were replaced for a total of 10. But chief aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman — until Watergate caught up with them — were kept on, as was Henry Kissinger as the national security advisor.

Under Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, change in both the cabinet and staff during their second terms was significant. Both had new chiefs of staff and national



President Richard Nixon confers with Henry Kissinger, his national security advisor, in November 1972. Kissinger was one of only a few high-level officials who remained on the staff during the second term.

security advisors (Reagan later in 1985); seven of the 13 cabinet members were new under Reagan, eight of 14 for Clinton. For George W. Bush, although there was the normal attrition in White House staff through the first term, several of the major staff members remained in place: Chief of Staff Andrew Card Jr.; Communications Chief Dan Bartlett; Office of Management and Budget Director Josh Bolten; and senior advisor Karl Rove. In the cabinet, there were nine (out of now 15) new faces.

Yet sitting presidents face a number of similar challenges as they consider who will serve them during a second term:

- Many of the best appointees of the first term may be ready to move on.



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President George W. Bush meets with his cabinet in the Cabinet Room of the White House in September 2006. Left to right are Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez — all of whom rose to cabinet positions during Bush's second term.

- The pool of new prospects may be less talented or less willing to serve.
- Those continuing in office or promoted to higher positions may have become more allegiant to their department's interests and needs rather than the president's agenda.
- Political pressure on appointments from constituency groups may be greater and more organized than that faced on initially taking office.

POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES

Despite the advantage of a potentially more leisurely pace in filling key positions, sitting presidents face their own unique set of challenges: lessened political power, increased political opposition, less favorable media attention, and more modest presidential achievements in their second terms. The term limits of the 22nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, enacted in 1951,

has especially weakened the perceived political strength of post-Truman presidents: Talk of a “lame duck” now begins right after their re-election. The problem is immediately compounded if the president's election win was a narrow one, as it was for Woodrow Wilson in 1916 and Bill Clinton in 1996 (both at 49.2 percent) and for George W. Bush in 2004 (50.7 percent).

Even if their own electoral victory is impressive, second-term presidents are usually handicapped by the failure of the election results to produce a decisive win for their party in congressional elections. In fact, it is likely that congressional losses will occur or that there will be a split result in House of Representatives and Senate races: Woodrow Wilson in 1916 lost 21 members of his Democratic Party in the House and three in the Senate; Eisenhower in 1956 (-2 House, 0 Senate); Nixon in 1972 (+12 House, -2 Senate); Reagan in 1984 (+14 House, -2 Senate); and Clinton in 1996 (+9 House, -2 Senate). Three of these presidents even achieved significant popular

vote margins: Eisenhower (57.4 percent), Nixon (60.7 percent), and Reagan (58.8 percent). Despite George W. Bush's somewhat narrow victory in 2004, his party did manage to gain seven seats in the House and four in the Senate. But since the early 20th century, only Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1936 had a significant electoral win (60.8 percent) and seat gains for his party in both houses of Congress (+11 House, +6 Senate).

Interestingly, for the vice presidents who became president and were later elected in their own right, the picture is less bleak: Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 (56.4 percent, +44 House, Senate then not popularly elected); Calvin Coolidge in 1924 (54 percent, +22 House, +4 Senate); Harry Truman in 1948 (49.6 percent, +75 House, +9 Senate); and Lyndon Johnson in 1964 (61.1 percent, +36 House, +2 Senate).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This general disconnect between presidential and congressional election results makes it difficult for most presidents to claim an electoral "mandate" of their policies that Congress should enact, even when the president's margin of victory is significant. Nor is there the political "honeymoon" period that newly elected presidents experience in their early months in office. As a result, second-term presidents must choose their legislative agenda carefully: Fewer White House proposals are likely to be enacted, more political compromise and concessions will be needed, and opposition is likely to be greater as a lame duck is perceived as ever lamer. Second-term presidents also face the difficulty that some of their preferred legislation will be leftovers from the first term. The probability of new and ambitious proposals being enacted is not high.

Second-term presidents also must act quickly in securing passage of legislation. Midterm elections bring even more political bad news. Since 1906, no second-term president has had his party gain seats in either the House or the Senate with one exception, and that only for the House: Bill Clinton in 1998 (+5 House, 0 Senate).

In thinking about what they will do legislatively during a second term, presidents would thus be wise to bear in mind that:

- First-term presidencies generally focus on domestic policy priorities, but building a winning coalition on domestic matters, especially if they are controversial or divisive, is likely to be more difficult in a second term.
- Second-term presidencies are likely to be more successful in the foreign policy arena, even though there is less congressional deference than in the past.
- Re-election often generates hubris and overconfidence; presidents may be inclined to overreach (Franklin Roosevelt's Supreme Court packing plan) or make costly mistakes (Nixon's response to Watergate; Iran-Contra for Reagan).
- If ambitious legislation is proposed, it must occur early in the second term; as a lame duck, the president's power position declines over time, his party's strength in Congress will likely lessen, and congressional opposition will likely increase.

Overall, then, securing re-election is a personal triumph for a sitting president. But a personal triumph is not necessarily a successful presidential triumph as presidents continue in office. Second terms present new challenges. These are not insurmountable, and some presidents have done better than others. As with a successful first term, effective transition planning is needed. But what makes for success the second time around is different in many respects. Sitting presidents are wise to recognize the importance of transition planning, but they must also understand how that task now differs for their second term. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Transition FAQs



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On January 20, 1997, U.S. Secret Service agents check manholes on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., in preparation for the Inaugural Parade.

- **What is the legal foundation for the transition process?**

The Presidential Transition Acts of 1963 and 2000 [<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/sd106-30/pdf/pl106-293.pdf>] provide the legal framework giving the General Services Administration (GSA) a prominent role in this process. They authorize the administrator of GSA to provide the president-elect and the vice-president-elect the services and facilities needed to assume their official duties.

- **Why is the inauguration held so long after the election?**

Inaugurations were originally held on March 4 to allow plenty of time for the electors from each state to cast their ballots. The date was changed to January 20 by a constitutional amendment in 1933.

- **How much do Americans spend on an inauguration?**

Inaugural balls are funded privately, and spending varies from administration to administration. George W. Bush's 2005 celebration included nine inaugural balls and was the most expensive in history at over \$42 million. Bill Clinton's first inauguration cost about \$30 million, which was comparable to the inaugural costs of George H.W. Bush in 1989.

The mayor of Washington, D.C., has predicted that security and services for the 2009 inauguration will cost the city some \$50 million, the same amount Congress provided to both Denver, Colorado, and St. Paul, Minnesota, to host the Republican and Democratic conventions in 2008.

- **What special security measures are taken for the ceremony?**

Security measures include street closures on both sides of the Pennsylvania Avenue Inaugural Parade route, thousands of surveillance cameras, air patrols, sharpshooters, and personal searches. All parade and event attendees are subject to a thorough security screening. The city doubles its 4,100-member police force by calling in officers from other districts, a combined air security plan provides airspace security for the Washington metropolitan area, and there is an enhanced security presence on the waterways around the city.

- **Is there a specified book on which the new president takes the oath of office?**

Each president-elect has chosen a Bible to use. Several have used the one from the first inauguration, George Washington's in New York in 1789 — George W. Bush, for example. Barack Obama will use the same burgundy velvet-bound Bible that was used by Abraham Lincoln at his first inauguration in 1861.

- **When does the old president move out of the White House and the new president move in?**

When the outgoing and incoming presidents and their families depart the White House at about 10:45 A.M. on January 20, following a traditional coffee meeting, a team of 97 White House workers begins a precisely choreographed, discreet transformation. In only three hours, they will move the outgoing family's possessions out of and the incoming family's belongings in to the 132-room presidential mansion.

- **Who handles the arrangements for the inauguration?**

The General Services Administration provides support throughout the transition. For the inauguration, various military groups provide logistical support and participate in the ceremony. The Presidential Inaugural Committee decides the details, and the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies handles most of the events at the Capitol.

- **Who swears in the president?**

Traditionally, the chief justice of the United States administers the oath of office to the president.

- **Is the vice president inaugurated at the same time?**

The vice president is inaugurated shortly before the president. In 1997, for example, Associate Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg administered the oath of office to Vice President Al Gore, Jessye Norman sang a medley of patriotic songs and spirituals, and then Bill Clinton took the oath of office.



On January 11, 2009, stand-ins take part in a practice session for the January 20 presidential inauguration.

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- **Is the outgoing or incoming president required to submit a budget?**

Prior to 1990, all outgoing presidents were obligated to submit a budget, but a change in the law in 1990 has allowed the outgoing president to leave the budget submission to his successor, an option exercised since that time.

- **We know Barack Obama likes basketball. Is there a court in the White House?**

There is an outdoor court near the swimming pool, as well as a horseshoe pit installed by George H.W. Bush. More information is available at <http://www.whitehousemuseum.org/>.

- **Are inaugurations always held in Washington, D.C.? When have they been held somewhere else?**

Under normal circumstances, inaugurations are held on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. George Washington's first inauguration (1789) was in New York City and his second in Philadelphia. Thomas Jefferson was the first president whose inauguration (1801) was in Washington, D.C., which had become the capital in June 1800. When there is an extraordinary transition, as upon the death of a president, the new president is sworn in as quickly as possible. For example, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Lyndon Johnson was sworn in by a federal district judge aboard Air Force One (the presidential airplane), and upon the death of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge was sworn in by his father, a notary public, at his family's homestead in Plymouth, Vermont.

- **How can one follow the events related to the transition?**

The Obama transition team has set up a Web site at www.change.gov.

Additional Resources

Books, Articles, and Web Sites on Presidential Transitions

Presidential Appointments

Abramson, Mark A., ed. *Getting It Done: A Guide for Government Executives*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
<http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/GettingItDone.pdf> [PDF format, 150 pages].

Abramson, Mark A., ed. *The Operator's Manual for the New Administration*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.
http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/Operators_Manual.pdf [PDF format, 194 pages].

The Plum Book (United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions): 2008 Edition.
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/plumbook/2008/index.html>

PrunesOnline: A Guide to Presidential Appointments
<http://www.excellenceintransition.org/>

Transition to a New Presidential Administration. (U.S. Office of Personnel Management)
<http://www.opm.gov/transition/TRANS20R-Ch1.htm>

U.S. Office of Personnel Management. *Presidential Transition: Guide to Federal Human Resources Management*. Washington, DC: Office of Personnel Management, 2008.
<http://www.chcoc.gov/Transmittals/Attachments/trans1300.pdf> [PDF format, 66 pages].

The Inauguration

"I Do Solemnly Swear ..." (Library of Congress)
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pihtml>

"I Do Solemnly Swear" (U.S. Senate Historical Office)
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<http://lostintransition.nationaljournal.com/>

Office of the President Elect — the blog
<http://change.gov/newsroom/blog/>

The Presidential Transition (from the IBM Center for the Business of Government)
<http://transition2008.wordpress.com/>

Resource of the Week: Change Is Good
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