



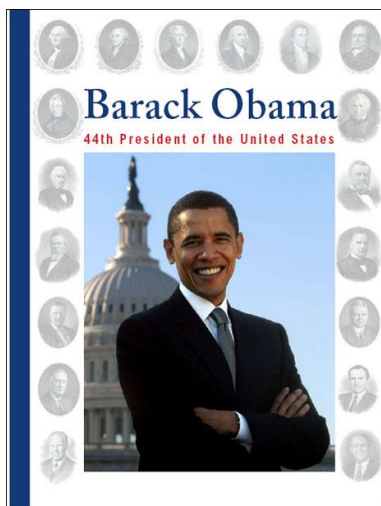
**AMERICAN INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER
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**IRC WHAT'S NEW
January 2009**

Special Issue: Presidential Transition

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Barack Obama: 44th President of the United States

Barack Obama, elected the 44th President of the United States, has lived a truly American life, and has opened a new chapter in American politics. This publication tells the story of Obama's life, describes how he captured the presidency, and portrays his vision for the future. It also introduces readers to the Obama family and to the new Vice President, Joseph Biden.

Ask America

Ask America allow foreign audiences to interact with American citizens on wide range of topics using a chat tool over the Internet. U.S. government and private sector subject experts, academics, journalists, and everyday citizens are brought on as guests to do webchats on USINFO. You may visit the [Ask America HomePage](#) to see upcoming ones, and read the transcripts of the previous webchats.

Podcasts

<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/podcasts.html>
Audio files and transcripts from America.gov

Videos

<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html?videoid=1498976413>
Video files on foreign policy, U.S. politics, American life, democracy, science and health.

Blogs

<http://blogs.america.gov/>
Blogs at America.gov offers readers a place to discuss designated topics with experts from the United States and around the world, and to share their comments and reactions with the broader Internet public.

2008 HISPANIC POLICY AGENDA. National Hispanic Leadership Agenda]. 2008.

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) platform is comprised by 26 national Hispanic organizations. It is a product of meetings and input from Latino leaders and advocates from around the nation, focuses on civil rights, economic empowerment, education, government accountability, health and immigration not only from the perspective of what is good for the Latino community but what is essential for the nation's future.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.civilrights.org/members/transition/docs/nhla_2008_hispanic_policy_agenda.pdf [PDF format, 58 pages].

ACHIEVING REAL IMPROVEMENT IN FEDERAL POLICY AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES: THE NEXT FRONTIER. National Academy of Public Administration and the George Washington University. Kathryn Newcomer and F. Stevens Redburn. October 2008.

A new Administration eager to successfully implement its policy goals has the challenge of quickly identifying what is worth retaining and what is not of the performance management procedures established by the previous Administration. A new Administration also has an opportunity to redeploy the assets it inherits and draw lessons from recent experience about what will be most effective in achieving Presidential priorities. The guidance is based on review of the experience of the last decade with efforts to bring performance information to bear in improving how programs are managed, and in improving decisions on policy design and use of resources.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.napawash.org/achieving_real_improvements_10_08.pdf [PDF format, 11 pages].

AN AGENDA FOR STRENGTHENING OUR NATION'S DEMOCRACY: CONFERENCE REPORT & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS. America Speaks. Stuart Comstock-Gay et al. November 2008.

The authors regard the report as a practical agenda for addressing the increasing loss of peoples' trust in our systems of politics and governance. Advocates, scholars, and thinkers outline a broad agenda for democracy reform. In order to encourage the maximum levels of voter turnout, to practice people-centered governance, and to seek and genuinely value everyone's participation, an infrastructure of participation and governance that welcomes everyone needs to be built.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.americaspeaks.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/strengthening_democracy.pdf [PDF format, 22 pages].

BREAKING DOWN WALLS: OVERCOMING INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT. Anthony E. Shorris. November 24, 2008.

A political consensus has developed in the United States that significantly increased spending on the nation's aged infrastructure is necessary for America to remain prosperous. President-elect Barack Obama and the new congressional leadership have promised to push for major new investments in the nation's transportation networks, water systems, broadband capabilities, electrical grid, and other public facilities. While supporting those investments, a new report makes clear that there are serious institutional barriers to the effective use of those funds that have to be overcome if we are to put the new dollars to use wisely.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.tcf.org/publications/economicsinequality/shorris.pdf> [PDF format, 26 pages].

A CALL TO REVITALIZE THE ENGINES OF GOVERNMENT. RAND Corporation. Bernard D. Rostker. Web posted December 10, 2008.

According to Rostker, as part of a broad loss of confidence in government dating back to the 1970s, federal officials have faced increasing pressure to reduce the size of the federal government and to privatize the provision of services traditionally provided by government. As a result, government agencies have come to rely extensively on contractors. The paper argues that such reliance has harmed the federal government's ability to carry out the nation's business in a variety of ways, the most important of which is that the interests of contractors are ultimately private gain and do not necessarily align with those of the government. Rostker maintains that, to provide appropriate oversight of contractors and ensure that inherently governmental work is done by federal civilian employees, the government must increase the size of its in-house workforce, eliminate "personnel ceilings" and other restrictions that arbitrarily limit the number of people that government agencies may employ.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2008/RAND_OP240.pdf [PDF format, 28 pages].

COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE. Congressional Management Foundation. December 15, 2008.

After nearly 10 years of research, outreach, and study of the communications between citizens and Congress, Congressional Management Foundation shows recommendations for all stakeholders and suggests improvements to the structure and processes for managing congressional communications.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.cmfweb.org/storage/cmfweb/documents/CMF_Pubs/cwc_recommendationsreport.pdf [PDF format, 84 pages].

DEEPEST CUTS: REPAIRING HEALTH MONITORING PROGRAMS SLASHED UNDER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION. Natural Resources Defense Council. Miriam Rotkin-Ellman et al. December 2008.

Millions of Americans have been left in the dark about hazardous pollutants being released into their communities, according to the report by the Natural Resources

Defense Council (NRDC). It provides a comprehensive look at the past administration's systemic cutting of health and environmental programs that monitor toxins across America. It also evaluates the current state of federal environmental and health monitoring programs in five key areas, air quality, water quality, food safety, toxic substance and human health.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.nrdc.org/health/deepestcuts/deepestcuts.pdf> [PDF format, 42 pages].

DISABILITY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION AND 111TH CONGRESS. Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. November 17, 2008.

This transition document conveys the major issues facing the new Administration and Congress for people with disabilities and their families and Consortium for Citizen's with Disabilities (CCD)'s recommended solutions. In addition, the document lists those Administration positions subject to Presidential appointment which are critical to people with disabilities and which should be filled with individuals with a disability perspective. It is intended as a resource to policy-makers.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.c-c-d.org/task_forces/trans/CCD-Transition-Recommendations-11-17-08.pdf [PDF format, 47 pages].

ETHICS LAWS AND RULES FOR DEPARTING MEMBERS AND STAFF.

Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, U.S. House of Representatives. November 20, 2008.

With the 110th Congress drawing to a close, we thought it would be helpful to highlight some of the ethics laws and rules that apply to departing Members and their staffs.

http://ethics.house.gov/Media/PDF/pink_sheet_departing_members_staff_2008.pdf [PDF format, 3 pages].

THE FUTURE OF HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT. Space, Policy, and Society Research Group, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. December 2008.

The United States stands at the threshold of a new era of human spaceflight. In its first term, the new administration will make the most important decisions in a generation about this endeavor. According to the report, the new administration should ask "Why fly people into space?" The report gives the rationales for government-funded human spaceflight and addresses current policy questions in light of those rationales.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://web.mit.edu/mitsps/MITFutureofHumanSpaceflight.pdf> [PDF format, 16 pages].

HOW OBAMA SHOULD CONFRONT CLIMATE CHANGE. Brookings Institution. William J. Antholis and Bryan K. Mignone. December 2, 2008.

The days of the global warming deniers are long gone. The new era will be defined by how well Obama navigates, and ultimately defuses, a complex congressional minefield. Because the best policy is a lasting policy, climate enthusiasts would do well to look toward the political center.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/1202_climate_change_antholis.aspx08. [HTML format, various paging].

HUMAN RIGHTS AT HOME: A DOMESTIC POLICY BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. American Constitution Society for Law and Policy. Catherine Powell. October 2008.

As a new Administration takes office in January 2009, it will have an opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen the longstanding commitment of the United States to human rights at home and abroad. This commitment is one that has been expressed throughout U.S. history, by leaders from both parties, according to Catherine Powell. Further, she contends, in reality, however, when the idea of human rights is discussed in the United States today, more often than not the focus is on the promotion of human rights abroad and not at home. Reaffirming and implementing the U.S. commitment to human rights at home is critical. Overwhelming majority of Americans strongly embrace the notion of human rights as the idea that every person has basic rights regardless of whether or not the government recognizes those rights.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.acslaw.org/files/C%20Powell%20Blueprint.pdf> [PDF format, 44 pages].

INDIAN NATIONS AND THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION. National Congress of American Indians. John Dossett. October 17, 2008.

Indian Nations are sovereign governments, recognized under treaties and the U.S. Constitution. Yet tribal government issues have suffered from inattention during the transition and early years of many prior Administrations. If appointments and major policy decisions are delayed for extended periods, the long term issues in Indian country are left unaddressed and handed on to the next Administration. Any significant reform efforts must be planned during the transition and start at the beginning of an Administration if they are to succeed. The report lists suggestions to the presidential transition team on American Indian issues.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.ncai.org/ncai/2008annual/NCAI%2008%20Presidential%20Transition%20Plan.pdf> [PDF format, 47 pages].

MEMO TO PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA: MAKE U.S. HIV/AIDS MONEY MORE EFFECTIVE BY RELEASING DATA. Center for Global Development. Nandini Oommen. December 1, 2008.

The Center for Global Development suggests that the new administration move quickly to publicly release data from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Releasing funding and programmatic data, which have already been collected at tax payer expense, would make possible informed analysis on the impact of the billions of dollars that the U.S. spends to help developing countries address the pandemic, and thereby help to increase the impact of spending going forward.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://blogs.cgdev.org/globalhealth/2008/12/memo_to_presidente_1.php [HTML format, various paging].

MEMO TO THE PRESIDENT: REDEFINE AMERICA'S GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION. Brookings Institution. Colin I. Bradford. December 10, 2008.

America has made an awkward entrance into the 21st century. Bradford claims that the U.S.'s biggest security threat has become the United States itself. The unilateralist foreign policy of recent years has generated opposition and weakened our global standing. At the same time, the financial crisis has increased doubts about whether globalization really has a human face. The challenge now is to reverse these trends and redefine America's role in the world. To effectively address global expectations, U.S. must launch a fresh start to U.S. relations with the non-Western, developing world, recommends the study.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/1210_global_development_memo.aspx [HTML format, various paging].

A NEW ERA IN EDUCATION: REDEFINING THE FEDERAL ROLE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY. Office of Advocacy and Issues Management, National School Boards Association. November 2008.

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) released its vision for "A New Era in Education" to President-elect Barack Obama's education advisors. The plan details steps for redefining the federal role in education and offers suggestions for how the new Administration can make education an urgent national priority. It recommends an immediate reevaluation of the federal role to better reflect the need to partner with and support states and local school districts in their efforts to prepare all students to succeed in the 21st century economy. It means more than just funding programs directed to students with the greatest needs, but also providing reliable research and best practices linked to improving student achievement.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.nsba.org/MainMenu/Advocacy/FederalRole.aspx> [PDF format, 12 pages].

PETA'S TWO-POINT PLAN FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION TEAM. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. December 2008.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) recommends the creation of two national councils, a National Food Policy Council and a National Toxicity Council, to work toward improving the government's record on food and toxicology policy.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://blog.peta.org/archives/2008/12/petas_two-point.php [HTML format, various paging].

PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA AND THE 111TH CONGRESS: WHAT TO EXPECT. [Patton Boggs, LLP]. December 6, 2008.

President-elect Barack Obama is the first sitting Senator elected to the White House since

1960. He will begin his Presidency with a base of power his party has not seen since the elections of 1964 and 1974-76, which resulted in sweeping changes enacted by Congress. According to the report, from the catharsis of November 4, real prospects for change in this challenging environment are possible. It sketches out the sense of what the possibility of change means in the areas of appropriations policy,(including further earmark reform, defense and national security, employment law, energy and natural resources, environmental policy, financial services, food and drug law, health care, homeland security, Native American affairs, tax policy, technology and telecommunications policy, trade policy, and transportation and infrastructure.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.pattonboggs.com/files/News/ecc08749-57fb-4661-b720-0e5008939d82/Presentation/NewsAttachment/a010bcc1-c7d4-44b3-8e63-07087426f819/WASHINGTON-%234977208-v10-2008_Election_Analysis.pdf [PDF format, 70 pages].

PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION BRIEFS: POLCIY OPTIONS FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO ADDRESS POVERTY, HUNGER, AND INJUSTICE. Oxfam America. 2008.

Policy options for the Obama Administration to address poverty, hunger, and injustice.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/issues_we_work_on/presidential-transition/Oxfam-America-Transition-Briefing-Memo.pdf [PDF format, 25 pages].

PREVENTING GENOCIDE: A BLUEPRINT FOR U.S. POLICYMAKERS. U.S. Institute of Peace. Madeleine K. Albright and William S. Cohen. December 2008.

The report asserts that genocide is preventable, and that making progress toward doing so begins with leadership and political will. The report provides 34 recommendations, starting with the need for high-level attention, standing institutional mechanisms, and strong international partnerships to respond to potential genocidal situations when they arise; it lays out a comprehensive approach, recommending improved early warning mechanisms, early action to prevent crises, timely diplomatic responses to emerging crises, greater preparedness to employ military options, and action to strengthen global norms and institutions.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.usip.org/genocide_taskforce/pdf/FINAL%20REPORT.pdf [PDF format, 174 pages].

REMARKS OF PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA: ECONOMIC RECOVERY ADVISORY BOARD. C-SPAN. November 26, 2008.

President-elect Obama introduces new President's Economic Advisory Board.

http://www.c-span.org/pdf/obama2_112608.pdf [PDF format, 2 pages].

SERVING PEOPLE IN NEED, SAFEGUARDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION ON PARTNERSHIPS

WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. Brookings Institution. E.J. Dionne, Jr. and Melissa Rogers. December 2008.

One of President-elect Barack Obama's distinctive contributions to the nation's political debate is his call for a more productive, inclusive and open discussion of issues at the intersection of faith and public life. The paper suggests that there is much common ground. Heavy stress is laid on the history of cooperation between religious institutions and government.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/12_religion_dionne/12_religion_dionne.pdf [PDF format, 58 pages].

TALKING TO TEHRAN. Council on Foreign Relations. Greg Bruno. December 17, 2008.

After eight years of avoiding direct diplomacy, the United States is ready to talk with Iran's ruling mullahs. But whether Iran will listen to what Washington is pitching is another matter. Bruno cites Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert, who argues that "successful engagement with Iran will require a direct channel of communication" with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, which is no small task given the Iranian regime's historic resentment of American policies. He also cites George Mason University scholar Jack Goldstone, who wrote, "Obama must not only signal his willingness to talk, but also a willingness to change U.S. policies."

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/18012/> [HTML format, various paging].

A TIME FOR DIPLOMATIC RENEWAL: TOWARD A NEW U.S. STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. Brookings Institution. December 2008.

Some of the suggested initiatives will take considerable time to ripen and bear fruit, like rebuilding Palestinian capabilities, promoting political development in Arab countries, increasing energy security; whereas it may be possible or necessary to realize others relatively early on, like assembling a new diplomatic offer to Iran backed by the threat of harsher sanctions, drawing down troops in Iraq, promoting Israeli-Syrian peace.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/12_middle_east_haass/12_middle_east_haass.pdf [PDF format, 26 pages].

TRANSITIONING DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONAL INITIATIVES: AN ASSESSMENT OF KEY 2001-2008 DEFENSE REFORMS. Center for Strategic & International Studies. Kathleen H. Hicks. December 9, 2008.

The CSIS U.S. Defense and National Security Group and Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group examined eight years of defense reforms during the administration of George W. Bush and identified for the incoming administration (1) successful reforms to maintain, (2) partially successful reforms to improve, (3) and failed experiments to halt. Presidential transitions often bring the promise of new opportunities and the threat of reversing key advances. With this in mind, the CSIS U.S. Defense and National Security

Group and the Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group conducted a study aimed at informing the next Secretary of Defense's transition decisions. The CSIS study team focused on the Defense Department's internal operations in the categories of strategic direction, force development, force employment, force management, and corporate support.

[Note: contains copyrighted material]

http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/081209_hicks_transdeforg_web.pdf [PDF format, 84 pages].

VOA ONLINE DISCUSSION: PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION, EXECUTIVE POWER. Voice of America. James Pfiffner and Erin Brummett. December 17, 2008.

The nature of executive authority and the concept of separation of powers are discussed with Public Policy expert James Pfiffner, who has written extensively about the presidency, American National Government and public management.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-12-17-Executive-Power.cfm> [HTML format, various paging].

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