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Thoughts on Presidential Transitions

To: Whom It May Concern
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Executive Director of the Bush-Cheney Transition
Subject: Presidential Transition Thoughts and Presidential Personnel

This is to lay out my personal thoughts, observations, and recommendations regarding Presidential Transitions for the benefit of future transitions. Attached, also, are the personal thoughts of the people who were in charge of Administration, Policy, Presidential Personnel, Legal and Legislative Affairs during the transition. The recommendations here should apply to any transition, not just one with the shortened time frame of the 2000 Bush-Cheney Transition.

- Set specific goals for the Transition and assign specific people to be responsible for the accomplishment of each (Exhibit A). Without goals the Transition will be spent responding to the tremendous inflow of advice, job seekers, volunteers, well-wishers, and press inquiries.
- Expect a large number of job seekers, 40,000 in the first few weeks and 75,000 in the first few months. Make an on-line application available on a transition web site; so the data entry is done by the applicant and the applicant can be most specific about his or her interests. Also use the web site to help potential applicants think about the reality of public service: it's not for everyone, the pay is low and the hours are long, divestiture of assets is often called for, there are post service employment and lobbying restrictions, and there is a lot of public and Congressional scrutiny.
- Expect a lot of advice, from members of previous Administrations, "experts", interest groups, lobbyists, Governors, Legislators, donors and the like.
- Organize to receive this information: "partner" with them but in such a way as not to be consumed by the partnership. Designate different people to work with the different groups. Governors, donors, members of Congress should have separate contact people within the Transition.
- Send a mailing to Governors, Mayors, Members of Congress, donors, supporters, etc, to tell them how best to communicate with the Transition. Differentiate between how they apply for a position, recommend someone for a position, provide input, and volunteer.
- Be aggressively proactive in connecting with Congress. Designate senior people with established credibility to actively seek input, and set up a system for tracking and ensuring responses to Congressional recommendations and questions.
- Make sure the people in charge of the Transition are not also in charge of winding down the Campaign: the former look ahead while the latter look back.
- Use small teams of people to interact with Department personnel and put together briefing books, and exclude lobbyists and overt job seekers from these teams. Create separate advisory groups to involve lobbyists and receive their input, but do not let them interact directly with the Departments or submit a group recommendation.
- Focus on getting the new Cabinet Secretary designees off to an informed, confident start. Provide them basic briefing material on the Department, the President-elect's campaign promises on their subject area, a group to support them during the confirmation process (a chief shepherd who's helped previous nominees get confirmed, a public affairs person, a Presidential Personnel contact, and a cabinet affairs person), a lot of contact information, and temporary office space (preferably so all the Secretary designees can be near and get to know each other).

- Make every effort to designate senior White House staff by January 1st; so the senior group can get comfortable working together and used to managing the President-elect's schedule in the weeks leading up to the inaugural like they will manage it after he/she takes the oath of office.
- Select someone to be in charge of Presidential Personnel at least 6 months before the election. Have him/her confer with enough subject matter principals to reach preliminary conclusions about the type of person the President-elect should be seeking for each Secretary position, and solicit suggestions about who should be considered for each. Then the initial Cabinet Secretary discussions can be substantive and goal oriented, and not just about who did what during the campaign.
- Have early conversations with Secretary designees about the collaborative nature of the subcabinet selection process (Exhibit B).
- To be competitive with previous administrations, set as a goal to nominate about 165 or more PAS's to the Senate by the 100th day. Set up Presidential Personnel to be able to prepare the President to sign off on about 20 to 25 PAS nominees per week; and count on it taking 6 to 7 weeks to go from POTUS sign-off to nomination. You can not do enough to track/manage the flow of paperwork to the potential nominee and its timely return, and the timeliness of the FBI's and OGE's clearance work: the overall clearance process must be actively managed.
- Plan on the Transition costing at least \$9 million. The 1992 and 2000 (Exhibit C) Transitions both cost this amount. Have Finance ready to field a direct mail solicitation shortly after the election for the difference between what is forecasted and what GSA provides.
- Count on needing at least 800 people, at the peak. Reagan and Clinton used 1000+. The majority of these can be volunteers, as there will be plenty of volunteers for general support and most of the policy people can be pulled from Congressional staffs who are in Fall recess.
- It is a good idea to use private Transition monies to pay for temporary housing for Transition workers, and to provide some relocation assistance. For legal reasons all of this support must be provided and paid out before the Inauguration. In 2000, Senior Staff were given the estimated amount of their physical moves, while all other staff members relocating to DC from the Campaign or Governor's office were given \$1000 each.



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