# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# assistant to the president and director of speechwriting, executive office of the president

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Position Type | Presidential appointment (PA)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Agency Mission | The Office of Communications crafts the message the president delivers to the world, from inception to execution. From planning an address to the nation to working closely with local newspapers, the Office of Communications collaborates with media of all types to advance the agenda of the president.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Overview | The assistant to the president and director of speechwriting oversees all of the president’s public remarks.[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| Compensation | $176,461 in 2016[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| Position Reports to | Reports through White House Chief of Staff to the President |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | Former assistants to the president for speechwriting have directed a speechwriting team, which generally includes two deputies and a core team that writes, edits, researches and fact checks every speech. The speechwriting team varies in size and scope, depending on the preferences of the president. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Writes speeches for the president in the president’s voice, for a variety of public appearances * Consults directly with the president to discuss speeches[[5]](#endnote-5) * Collaborates with a large number of White House employees, including policy advisors, researchers and other writers[[6]](#endnote-6) * Knows the position, policy agenda and preferred writing and speaking style of the president * Meets with the president, White House chief of staff and other senior staff members, as appropriate, to identify the goal of the speech and the broad framework of points or messages * Researches topics, understands audience and factors in the means for conveying the message * Blends points, themes, positions and messages with research to create an informative, original and authentic speech for the president[[7]](#endnote-7) |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Command of the spoken and written word * Thorough understanding of the political climate, and the president’s agenda and policies * A strong sense of history and literature |
| Competencies | * Comfortable maintaining anonymity[[8]](#endnote-8) * Willingness to work long hours to meet deadlines[[9]](#endnote-9) * Willingness to collaborate with other White House employees[[10]](#endnote-10) * Ability to translate complex economic and policy issues into a clear message for the general public * Ability to write in a voice that reflects the character and style of the president * Ability to absorb facts and impacts of crisis situations and write swiftly under pressure, without sacrificing quality of thought * Comfortable accepting criticism and comments, and ability to deftly incorporate changes into redrafts[[11]](#endnote-11) |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Cody Keenan (2012 to 2017)[[12]](#endnote-12) - Deputy Director of Speechwriting, Executive Office of the President[[13]](#endnote-13); Speechwriter, President Obama’s General Election Campaign[[14]](#endnote-14); Legislative Aide, Senate[[15]](#endnote-15) | |
| Jon Favreau (2009 to 2012) - Director of Speechwriting, President Obama’s General Election Campaign; Deputy Director of Speechwriting, former Sen. John Kerry’s General Election Campaign; Speechwriter, then President-elect Obama’s Senate office[[16]](#endnote-16) | |
| Marc Thiessen (2008 to 2009) - Chief Speechwriter to Secretary Rumsfeld, Department of Defense[[17]](#endnote-17); Spokesman and Senior Policy Advisor to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman; Press Secretary, 1994 Huffington for Senate Campaign in California[[18]](#endnote-18) | |

1. Plum book [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.whitehouse.gov/participate/internships/departments#Comms [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://medium.com/the-white-house/watch-and-read-white-house-chief-speechwriter-cody-keenan-s-commencement-address-to-nyu-s-wagner-d6a543585af#.v5400mtb4> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/21stcenturygov/tools/salaries> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/working/2016/07/working_how_does_cody_keenan_the_president_s_director_of_speechwriting_work.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/state-union-meet-cody-keenan-president-obama-s-speechwriter-n494816> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/02/12/meet-cody-keenan-lead-speechwriter-on-obama-s-2013-state-of-the-union.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/state-union-meet-cody-keenan-president-obama-s-speechwriter-n494816> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/state-union-meet-cody-keenan-president-obama-s-speechwriter-n494816> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Romney Readiness Project position description [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/state-union-meet-cody-keenan-president-obama-s-speechwriter-n494816> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/Felsenthal-Files/February-2013/Cody-Keenan-Obamas-Chief-Speechwriter-Chicago-Born-and-Mostly-Bred/> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/Felsenthal-Files/February-2013/Cody-Keenan-Obamas-Chief-Speechwriter-Chicago-Born-and-Mostly-Bred/> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/Felsenthal-Files/February-2013/Cody-Keenan-Obamas-Chief-Speechwriter-Chicago-Born-and-Mostly-Bred/> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/11/26/obama_appoints_white_house_spe.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/12/20071214-12.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. <http://www.ovalofficewriters.com/team.htm#1> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)