



TOP 15 COSTS OF DELAYING THE PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

For nearly 60 years, the Presidential Transition Act has helped ensure the smooth and orderly transfer of power. In every election since its passage, with the exception of the year 2000, the administrator of the General Services Administration has quickly ascertained the apparent winner, unlocking crucial government support for the president-elect and the American people.

That support has been unnecessarily and unreasonably delayed this year.

President-elect Joe Biden is moving forward with substantial parts of the transition – as he should – including naming appointees, communicating with foreign leaders, laying out his policy agenda and shifting from [campaigning to governing](#). However, the continued withholding of critical federal transition support will deprive him – and more importantly, the American people – of the benefits of a smooth transition to power.

With a little over two months before Inauguration Day and the country facing a raging pandemic, an economic crisis and numerous national security and domestic challenges, the cost of delay increases every day. While today's factual circumstance is substantially [different than in the year 2000](#), Bush-Cheney transition [Chairman Dick Cheney outlined](#) the costs of a delayed transition that year.

While President-elect Biden can make significant progress independently without ascertainment by the GSA administrator, below is only a partial list of critical transition-related support functions that are being withheld.

1. Coordination with and briefings by the [17 agencies](#) within the intelligence community.
2. Cooperation between the Biden team and agencies responding to the COVID-19 pandemic on such critical programs such as Operation Warp Speed that are designed to develop and distribute vaccines to more than 300 million Americans.
3. Assistance from more than 100 career agency transition directors and career staff to help inform future Cabinet officers and agency heads.
4. Access to briefing materials prepared by thousands of career federal employees over the past [six months](#).
5. Access to agency succession plans, as required by law, naming the acting officials who will hold key agency positions until political appointees are in place.
6. State Department facilitation of conversations with dozens of foreign leaders, consistent with [best practice](#).
7. Communication by the State Department of [official messages from foreign governments](#) to the Biden transition team.
8. Access to an official .gov website and email domains, forcing reliance on a private network.

9. Government software applications for the intake applicants for political appointments for national security and other key positions, ensuring that the Biden transition team has access to the best and brightest to serve our country.
10. Homeland security and emergency preparedness exercises as required by law. The outgoing Bush administration's effort in 2008-2009 focused on terrorism prevention; the outgoing Obama administration's effort focused on prevention and management of a global pandemic.
11. Access to \$6.3 million in congressionally appropriated funds and use of 175,000 square feet of office space, including press briefing rooms, meeting rooms and space developed to facilitate COVID-related social distancing.
12. Secure facilities for sensitive intelligence briefings.
13. Additional secure computers and devices for the growing Biden transition team.
14. Coordination with agency ethics officials to ensure that Biden nominees disclose and, if necessary, divest of assets that could create conflicts of interest, in accordance with federal ethics laws.
15. The final step in adjudicating final, non-interim security clearances, which cannot be issued by the Department of Justice and partnering agencies until ascertainment (although some current clearance-holders may receive a final clearance, pre-ascertainment, based on reciprocity).

Every day that is lost in a transition can never be made up. And every day the nation gets closer to Inauguration Day is increasingly more consequential without a smooth transition of power. That is why the [Presidential Transition Act](#) succinctly states: “Any disruption occasioned by the transfer of the executive power could produce results [detrimental to the safety and well-being](#) of the United States and its people.”