

The Washington Post

100 DAYS

President Obama's
First Months in Office

DATE ON WHICH MICHELLE OBAMA WORE A J. CREW ENSEMBLE TO VISIT 10 DOWNING STREET: **APRIL 1** » TIME THAT DAY BY WHICH J. CREW'S WEB SITE HAD SOLD OUT OF HER CARDIGAN: **10 A.M. EASTERN** » INCREASE IN J. CREW STOCK SINCE JAN. 20: **65%**

MICHELLE OBAMA'S FAVORABLE RATING
IN JUNE '08: **48%**
NOW: **76%**

NUMBER OF AIG FINANCIAL PRODUCTS EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVED BONUSES OF \$1 MILLION OR MORE: **73** » TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONUSES RECEIVED BY AIG FINANCIAL PRODUCTS EMPLOYEES: **\$165 MILLION** » AMOUNT THEY PLEDGED TO RETURN: **\$50 MILLION**

AGE OF YOUNGEST PERSON APPOINTED BY OBAMA TO A SENIOR WHITE HOUSE POST: **25**
AGE OF THE OLDEST: **65** » AVERAGE AGE: **46**

NUMBER OF APPOINTMENTS CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE: 65
NUMBER OF CONFIRMABLE POSITIONS REMAINING: 421

NUMBER OF BANKS THAT HAVE FAILED SINCE OBAMA TOOK OFFICE: 27
NUMBER THAT FAILED IN ALL OF 2008: 25

PERCENTAGE OF RONALD REAGAN'S CABINET MEMBERS WHO WERE WHITE: **94** » OF GEORGE H.W. BUSH'S: **82** » OF BILL CLINTON'S: **68** » OF GEORGE W. BUSH'S: **73** » OF OBAMA'S: **55**

PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS WHO SAID THE NATION WAS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IN DECEMBER: **15**
PERCENTAGE WHO FEEL THAT WAY NOW: **50**

NUMBER OF FORMER PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN OBAMA'S CABINET: **1**

CHANGE IN DOW JONES INDUSTRIAL AVERAGE FROM JAN. 20, 2009: **+1%**
CHANGE FROM JAN. 20, 2008: **-34%**

PERCENTAGE OF ANNOUNCED, NOMINATED OR CONFIRMED OBAMA OFFICIALS WHO WORKED IN THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION: **41**

PERCENTAGE OF U.S. PRESIDENTS SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II WHO HAVE BEEN LEFT-HANDED: **42**

PERCENTAGE OF GENERAL POPULATION THAT IS LEFT-HANDED: **10**

NUMBER OF DAYS GEORGE W. BUSH WAS IN OFFICE BEFORE HE REINSTITATED THE POLICY PROHIBITING INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING FEDERAL FUNDING FROM PERFORMING ABORTIONS: **2**

GROWTH RATE IN THE U.S. ECONOMY IN THE QUARTER BEFORE BILL CLINTON TOOK OFFICE: +4.5%

IN THE QUARTER BEFORE GEORGE W. BUSH TOOK OFFICE: +2.1%

IN THE QUARTER BEFORE OBAMA TOOK OFFICE: -6.3%

NUMBER OF ARTICLES IN MAJOR NEWSPAPERS MENTIONING "PORTUGUESE WATER DOG" OVER THE PAST YEAR: **45**
PERCENTAGE OF THOSE ARTICLES THAT WERE PUBLISHED OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS: **75%**



Obama's First 100 Days

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Explore the key moments in Obama's presidency in an interactive graphic and timeline.

This digital newsbook was produced for The Washington Post at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute in Columbia, Missouri.

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ARTICLE 1

First Published: April 26, 2009

Obama Off to Solid Start, Poll Finds

By JON COHEN AND JENNIFER AGIESTA

ARTICLE 2

First Published: April 26, 2009

A Hundred Anxious Days

By ELI SASLOW

ARTICLE 3

First Published: April 29, 2009

Bruised by Stimulus Battle, Obama Changed His Approach To Washington

By SCOTT WILSON

ARTICLE 4

First Published: April 29, 2009

How It Came Down to This: 244 Democrats, 0 Republicans

By PERRY BACON JR.

MORE

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ARTICLE 5

First Published: April 29, 2009

From the Start, Putting a Bold Stamp on the White House

By DAN BALZ

ARTICLE 6

First Published: April 29, 2009

Is FDR-Era Yardstick Still Relevant?

By PHILIP RUCKER

ARTICLE 7

First Published: April 29, 2009

What Historians Say

ARTICLE 8

First Published: April 29, 2009

Communicator in Chief Has A Tone for Every Situation

By ALEC MACGILLIS

ARTICLE 9

First Published: April 29, 2009

Making Themselves At Home Beyond the White House Walls

By RICHARD LEIBY

Obama Off to Solid Start, Poll Finds

*But Release of Memos on Detainee Interrogations
Reveals Deep Partisan Split*

By JON COHEN AND JENNIFER AGIESTA

First Published: April 26, 2009

BARACK OBAMA'S performance in the first 100 days of his presidency draws strong public approval in a new Washington Post-ABC News poll, but there is decidedly less support for his recent decision to release previously secret government memos on the interrogation of terrorism suspects, an initiative that reveals deep partisan fissures.

Overall, the public is about evenly divided on the questions of whether torture is justifiable in terrorism cases and whether there should be official inquiries into any past illegality involving the treatment of terrorism suspects. About half of all Americans, and 52 percent of independents, said there are circumstances in which the United States should consider employing torture against such suspects.



BY BILL O'LEARY — THE WASHINGTON POST

The president's setbacks have included missteps on nominations and faltering attempts at bipartisanship.

Barely more than half of all poll respondents back Obama's April 16 decision to release the memos specifying how and when to employ specific interrogation techniques. A third "strongly oppose" that decision, about as many as are solidly behind it. Three-quarters of Democrats said they approve of the action, while 74 percent of Republicans are opposed; independents split 50 to 46 percent in favor of the decision.

The release of the documents, which was fiercely debated at high levels within the government, met with quick fire from former vice president Richard B. Cheney, who said last week that companion memos showing the "success of the effort" should be declassified as well, arguing that the methods had "been enormously valuable in terms of saving lives, preventing another mass casualty attack against the United States."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who served in the same position in George W. Bush's administration, supported the release of the documents but said it made him "quite concerned with the potential backlash in the Middle East and in the theaters where we are involved in conflict — that it might have a negative impact on our troops."

Americans also split about evenly on whether the new administration should investigate whether the kind of treatment meted out to terrorism suspects under the Bush administration broke laws, with 51 percent in favor of such inquiries and 47 percent in opposition. About seven in 10 Democrats support such action; a similar proportion of Republicans opposes it. As a candidate, Obama said: "I would not want my first term consumed by what was perceived on the part of the Republicans as a partisan witch hunt, because I think we've got too many problems to solve."

The lukewarm response to Obama's actions on this front stand in stark contrast to his high ratings on handling terrorism and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of those polled said that, in general, his policies had either made the country safer from terrorism (32 percent) or not made much of a difference either way (43 percent).

Obama's overall rating remains high, with 69 percent of Americans approving of his job performance. He gets solid marks for his handling of the economy, maintaining a better-than-2-to-1 advantage over congressional Republicans on the issue. Majorities said that Obama has exceeded their ex-

pectations in his first three months in office, has accomplished big things and has kept his main campaign promises. Further, public optimism about the economy and the country's direction also remain on the rise since his election, even as few think his major economic initiatives have moved the needle on the nation's flagging economy, their communities or their finances.

Two-thirds of those polled approve of how Obama is handling international affairs in general, up slightly from last month, just before he embarked on his first European trip. Majorities of Americans also approve of how he is handling health care, global warming, taxes and Cuba, four areas in which the administration has tried to stake new ground in its first few months.

But Obama receives less glowing reviews on his handling of the burgeoning federal budget deficit and on immigration issues, where he is at the 50 percent mark, and he gets a negative rating on how he has dealt with the big U.S. automakers.

Beyond specific policy areas, Obama continues to get high personal favorability ratings across a range of attributes. Overall, 72 percent of Americans have a favorable impression of the new

president, down slightly from the eve of his inaugural but far higher than it was during the 2008 campaign. It is also about double Bush's favorability rating when he left office in January (37 percent) and above where Bill Clinton's was at this stage in 1993 (59 percent).

Nearly two-thirds said Obama has accomplished "a great deal" or "a good amount" in his first three months in office. In a Post-ABC poll at the 100-day mark in Clinton's first term, 37 percent said he had done that much. A majority, 54 percent, also said Obama had exceeded their expectations, significantly more than had said so of Clinton or Bush at the outset of their first terms.

Six in 10 Americans said Obama has kept most of his major campaign assurances, although most said he has not reduced the amount of political partisanship in Washington, as he had pledged to do. At the same time, 90 percent said he is willing to listen to different points of view, and close to two-thirds, 63 percent, said he has brought needed change to Washington.

About three-quarters of Americans see Obama as a "strong leader," as "honest and trustworthy," as empathetic and as someone who can be trusted in a crisis. Six in 10 said he is in sync

with their values, and nearly as many rate him a good commander in chief.

Most (62 percent) continue to see Obama's views on most issues as "just about right" ideologically, despite significant GOP pushback on his initial policy stances.

With 69 percent approving of his job performance, Obama's rating is about the average for postwar presidents at the 100-day mark. Obama's support among Republicans, with 36 percent approving, is similar to Bush's showing among Democrats in late April 2001, and at that time Bush's rating was a touch lower among independents than Obama's is today (62 percent then compared with 67 percent). In April 1993, Clinton had somewhat less backing from the GOP (26 percent of Republicans approved) and from the middle (independents were at 58 percent).

General optimism about the national economy has increased, with 55 percent holding cheery views about the year ahead, the highest level in more than two years, but only a third of those polled said the new stimulus package has helped the overall economy. About a quarter said the same of their communities, and one in seven said their personal financial situation had im-

proved as a result. Although few note immediate rewards, 59 percent said the government action either has or will boost the national economy.

Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill are getting a rougher treatment from Americans. Approval ratings for both parties in Congress have slipped since late February, and public confidence in their ability to make the right decisions for the country's future has dipped as well. Two months ago, independents were as apt to approve as disapprove of congressional Democrats; now 38 percent approve, and 55 percent do not.

There is a warning sign for the GOP in the new poll: 21 percent of those surveyed said they identify as Republicans, the fewest to do so in a Post-ABC poll in more than 25 years. Last fall, Democrats outnumbered Republicans at the polls by the biggest margin in network exit polls going back to the 1982 midterms.

The latest survey was conducted April 21 to 24 among a random national sample of 1,072 adults using standard and cellular phones. The results from the full poll have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points.



A Hundred Anxious Days

In a South Carolina Town Where the Downturn Has Deepened Since the Inauguration, Two Obama Supporters Have Struggled, Going From 'Fired Up' to Tired Out

By ELI SASLOW

First Published: April 26, 2009

GREENWOOD, S.C. Her cordless phone stores 17 voice messages, and tonight the inbox is full. Edith Childs, 60, grabs a bottle of water, tosses her hat on the living room floor and scowls at the blinking red light. A county councilwoman, she spent the past 12 hours driving rural roads in her 2001 Toyota Camry, trying to solve Greenwood's problems, but only now begins the part of each day that exhausts her. Childs slumps into an armless chair and steels herself for a 13-minute confessional.

"Hi, Ms. Edith, this is Rose, and I'm calling about my light bill. It's \$420. . . . There's no way I can pay that."



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Greenwood County Councilwoman Edith Childs, left, speaks with constituents.

"Edith, it's Francine. . . . They stopped by my house again today, talking about foreclosure. I don't know what to do. Can you call me?"

Childs leans her head back against the wall and closes her eyes. Her hair is matted down with sweat, and thin-



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Childs addresses a club at the United Methodist Church in Troy, about 20 miles from Greenwood. During President Obama's campaign, she came up with the "Fired up! Ready to go!" chant, and she remains a staunch supporter.

rimmed glasses sink low on her nose. Every few minutes, she stirs to jot notes on a to-do list that fills most of a notebook. She has to remind herself that she ran for county council in 1998 because she coveted this role: unofficial protector, activist and psychologist for her home town. Back then, the hardships of Greenwood — 22,000 people separated

from the nearest interstate by 40 miles — struck Childs as contained. Now she sometimes wonders aloud to her husband, Charles: "When does it stop?"

"Yes, councilwoman, this is Joe Thompson calling. Uh, I'm having a bit of an emergency."

Across the dark living room, one of Childs's favorite pictures is displayed

on a worn coffee table. It shows Childs with her arms wrapped around Barack Obama, his hand on her back, her eyes glowing. They met at a rally attended by 37 supporters on a rainy day in 2007, when Childs responded to Obama's sluggishness on stage with an impromptu chant: "Fired up! Ready to go!" She repeated it, shouting louder each time, until Obama laughed and dipped his shoulders to the rhythm. The chant caught on. "Fired up!" people began saying at rallies. "Ready to go," Obama chanted back. He told audiences about Childs, "a spirited little lady," and invited her onstage at campaign appearances. By the day of his inauguration, when Childs led a busload of strangers bound for the Mall in her now-iconic chant, her transformation was complete. She was Edith Childs, fired up and ready to go.

But now, as Obama nears the 100-day milestone of his presidency, Childs suffers from constant exhaustion. In a conservative Southern state that bolstered Obama's candidacy by supporting him early in the Democratic primaries, she awakens at 2:30 a.m. with stress headaches and remains awake mulling all that's befallen Greenwood since Obama's swearing-in.

On Day 4 of his presidency, the So-

lutia textile plant laid off 101 workers. On Day 23, the food bank set a record for meals served. On Day 50, the hospital fired 200 employees and warned of further job cuts. On Day 71, the school superintendent called a staff meeting and told his principals: "We're losing 10 percent of our budget. That means some of us won't have jobs next year, and the rest should expect job changes and pay cuts." On Day 78, the town's newly elected Democratic mayor, whose campaign was inspired partly by his admiration for Obama, summarized Greenwood's accelerating fragility. "This is crippling us, and there's no sign of it turning around," Welborn Adams said.

On Day 88, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that South Carolina had set a record for its highest unemployment rate in state history, at 11.4 percent. Greenwood's unemployment is 13 percent — more than twice what it was when Childs first started chanting.

"We have a lot of people who live in cold houses, with no jobs and no food," Childs says.

Hundreds of them call her, and the most desperate travel to Childs's single-story house on Old Ninety-Six Highway outside of town and knock on her front door. A retired nurse living with her

husband on modest savings, she makes \$725 a month for serving on the county council and uses that money to pay other people's bills: \$240 for her brother's electricity, because he can't find a job; \$300 for a young family's rent in a two-bedroom apartment, because they have a 5-year-old boy and no income; \$168 for a friend's water bill, because the county threatened to shut it off. When the \$725

runs out — and it always does — Childs dips into savings and tells Charles she spent the money on a new outfit.

"Always a fighter." That's how Childs describes herself. She disapproved of how her first husband wasted money on liquor, so she called him into the living room and lit a \$20 bill on fire to emphasize her point. She disliked Greenwood's plans to build a road between her neigh-



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Roslyn Morton, 43, who has been on disability since a heart attack in 2005, is one of many residents of Greenwood County, S.C., who rely on councilwoman Edith Childs for support. As the economy has worsened and her home town struggles, Childs has had sleepless nights, wondering: "When does it stop?"

borhood and a new housing project, so she filed a lawsuit and dragged it out for five years until she won. She thought Obama would make a good president, so, she says, “this mouthy black lady knocked on doors in the whitest, most Republican neighborhoods in town and told them what was on my mind.”

Now Obama is president, and she still believes he will help rescue Greenwood County. But her enthusiasm has faded into a wary optimism. “He’s only one man, and there’s a lot to get done,” she says, a predicament she knows all too well.

“I never used to get tired, but I’m running out of energy,” she says. “It’s stressful. Maybe one problem gets fixed, but it’s not fixed for long, and while you’ve been doing that, four other people have called asking for help.”

And their messages are waiting.

“Hi, Edith, this is Helen Witherspoon. I’m calling because I have a problem with my hot water heater and I’m wondering if you might know of a church or someone who can help me.”

A message near the end causes Childs to wince. It is from Evon Hackett, her younger cousin, who has always reminded Childs a little of herself. Hackett has “never wasted a lazy hour in her life,” Childs says. But now she is des-

perate and unemployed, and her voice barely registers above a whisper as it plays on Childs’s machine.

“Hey Edith. How ya been? Just calling again to see if you heard from anybody who was hiring. . . . You know me. I’ll do anything. It doesn’t really matter what the work is.”



Evon Hackett, 38, lost her job on Day 20 of Obama’s presidency. She was nearing the end of her Friday afternoon shift on the assembly line at Tyco Healthcare, stuffing three packets of diapers into each passing cardboard box for \$8.59 an hour, when a manager asked to see her. Hackett cleaned out her locker on the way to his office.

“What, was he going to give me a raise?” she said. “Huh-uh. Not happening. Not in Greenwood.”

The job search that began that afternoon with a phone call to Childs has since grown into an odyssey in futility: Twenty-two job applications. Six interviews. Three drug tests. Once, Hackett received a call from a meatpacking plant, asking her to arrive at 7 a.m. Monday for a new employee orientation. She gushed to friends about the company’s good benefits and its \$10.80-an-hour start-

ing salary, and she woke up Monday morning at 5:15 to bundle into the heavy winter clothes recommended for an eight-hour shift in a gargantuan refrigerator. She borrowed a friend's car and drove 40 miles on unfamiliar roads to the factory in Newberry. Fifteen minutes into the orientation, a manager called Hackett into his office. There had been a mistake, he explained. A clerical error. They had not intended to call her. Hackett was back home by sunrise.

Since then, mounting frustration has compelled her to distribute 50 résumés at a local job fair and to make road trips to factories in Clinton, Greenville and Abbeville. "There are no jobs in all of Greenwood," she says. "I think we're going to become a ghost town, or maybe some kind of town for rich, retired people."

She voted for Obama and still holds out hope for the man she calls a "people's president," but she's not interested in hearing his stories about flying to Europe or fighting pirates. "I guess he's



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

"There are no jobs in all of Greenwood," says Evon Hackett, who has searched in vain for work after a layoff in February. She holds out hope that President Obama will do something to help, saying, "I guess he's just working his way down the list, and he'll get to us."

just working his way down the list, and he'll get to us," she says.

Rather than wait for that day, Hackett decides to seize control of her situation one afternoon. If nobody will hire her, she will start her own business. She decides to sell Easter baskets to Greenwood parents who will buy them as holiday gifts for their children. On a shopping spree to purchase supplies at Wal-Mart, she overdraws her bank account by \$121 and returns home with enough stuffed rabbits, Spider-Man action figures and

Hannah Montana dolls for 17 baskets. She sorts them into neat piles on her parents' living room floor and ties red and pink ribbons around each basket, curling the trimming by running it between her thumb and a scissor blade.

Her sleeveless shirt reveals toned arms and broad shoulders earned during two decades of factory work. Only the deep creases under her eyes betray the stress of a hard 38 years — a battle with breast cancer in 2000, three layoffs in the past decade and her only son's incarceration

three hours away in Bishopville.

The Easter baskets distract her from what she considers the worst symptom of unemployment: deathly boredom. She monitors her father's recovery from a stroke and paints her parents' bathroom bright yellow to assuage the guilt of moving in with them after the lay-off. She sleeps 12 hours per night in her makeshift bedroom, where clothes sit in piles on the fraying carpet and a sheet hangs over the open doorway to allow a modicum of privacy.



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Hackett sits with her mother Mattie Fulton, left, granddaughter Daliasia Cunningham and her father Andrew Fulton.

During the final stages of the presidential campaign, Hackett obsessively tracked Obama on CNN and spent Election Day driving her neighbors to the polls so they could vote for him, but now she avoids watching the news. It puts her in “a dark mood,” she says. Instead, she rests her feet on a coffee table occupied by an unopened Bible and a half-empty jumbo bag of peanut M&M’s and watches cartoons or judge shows on the family’s 12-inch television.

“If I don’t distract myself, it starts getting depressing,” she says. “Every day is long, and I’m just looking for ways to pass them. It’s hard not to let my mind start thinking, ‘Am I ever going to get myself out of this?’”

After Hackett finishes tying together the Easter baskets, she displays them on a wooden table and admires her handiwork. “I’ve always been good with crafts,” she says approvingly. She tries to sell each basket for \$25, but potential buyers balk at the price. She considers setting up a sales table on her sister’s front lawn in Atlanta — “people got money there,” she says — but concludes that bus fare would negate her profits. Finally, a day before Easter, Hackett drops her price to \$20 and starts calling friends.

“I’m not trying to be a charity case,” she explains to one, “but I’m telling you these baskets are nice, and I could use the money.”

The strategy nets Hackett \$85 in profits, which she uses toward debts of \$121 owed to her bank, \$190 to her cellphone company and \$59 to a warehouse storing her furniture. Childs is her best customer, paying the full price of \$25 and purchasing two baskets.



Working on her daily to-do list one April morning, Childs visits an unemployed friend in Promised Land, a town of trailers 10 miles outside Greenwood, and then drops off a bag of food for a 92-year-old woman whose cupboard has emptied of everything but grits.

“Somebody probably needs something in every house we pass,” Childs says as she drives. “A lot have problems too big to solve.”

Just before 1 p.m., she pulls into Greenwood’s normally deserted downtown for a few more errands and notices a large crowd gathered in front of the courthouse. More than 200 people are dressed in red, white and blue and are waving miniature American flags. Childs asks a friend for details and learns that it is a “tea party” to



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Childs still supports the President even though things in Greenwood and other towns in South Carolina are being hit by the economic downturn. Unemployment is the State is the second highest in the nation.

protest Obama's economic policies, one of about 1,000 similar events coordinated on Tax Day across the country.

"Of course it's going to be a lot of white Republicans, and mostly men," Childs says as she walks through the crowd and finds a spot alone at the rear of the plaza. "I want to see this, but I'm keeping my distance."

In a state that voted 54 percent for

Republican presidential candidate John McCain, Childs has heard plenty of anti-Obama rhetoric. "Most people around here know where I stand and let me be," she says. "People are too polite to be nasty." So she shakes her head in disbelief as she reads the angry messages scrawled on the poster boards in front of her.

"Say NO to Obama and Socialism!"
"OBAMA'NATION."

“Who cares what Obama says? America IS a Christian nation.”

Childs puckers her lips and listens as Greenwood residents take turns stepping to the podium and shouting through a megaphone. Their speeches revolve around the same themes Childs hears in her phone messages, except what she identified as the solution to Greenwood's problems is what these speakers now disparage as the cause.

“We all know this president is the major problem,” David O. Davis III says. “I've got friends with families who are losing their jobs, getting laid off.”

“We're struggling to pay our bills and get by,” Cathy Heitzenrater says. “We're feeling disenfranchised from our own country and disappointed about who's running it.”

“Vote the bum out,” R.J. Fife says.

After each speaker finishes, Childs retreats a few steps farther from the crowd. A part of her would like to go grab the bullhorn and tell these people to “keep their mouths shut and give Obama a little time,” she says. But she woke up at 3 a.m. again this morning, and she can't go home for a nap until she pays \$100 on a constituent's bill at the water company and stops by a city office to inquire about possible job openings for Hackett.

“Let them have their tea party,” Childs says. “They're just looking for somebody to blame. My ears are full.”

She walks away from the courthouse as the crowd joins into chorus to sing the national anthem.



On Day 85 of the Obama presidency, Hackett wakes up and swaps her usual blue sweat pants for a pair of ironed capris and a denim jacket. Eight silver bracelets are divided between two wrists. Her hair is pulled into tight dreadlocks, which a friend twisted until 11 the night before. As Hackett stands up to leave her parents' house, she completes her outfit with a pair of pink high heels, purchased at the bargain price of \$15.99 because she managed to squeeze into the children's size.

“I want people to look at me and think, ‘Classy,’ ” Hackett says. “I don't want nobody thinking I'm some know-nothing loser.”

She fears drawing that conclusion herself, which is why she put off today's trip for almost a week. She is headed to the unemployment office, a place she describes as “the end of the road.” Since being laid off, she has visited five times and waited as long as two hours before getting her turn at one of the center's 10

computers. On this visit, she goes during lunch hour — the center's slowest time of the day — to minimize the odds of running into somebody she knows.

Her brother drops her off in front of a squat brown building in the center of town, and Hackett hurries to an open workstation at Computer No. 5. As usual, the center is what Director Joan Burgess describes as a “beehive of activity” — 47 people in one modest room, babies crying, cell-

phones ringing, voices rising despite the “Quiet Please” sign on the wall. All of Greenwood is represented inside: 25 blacks and 22 whites, 19 women and 28 men. Filing into the workstations near Hackett are an elderly blind woman carrying a cane, a young mother carrying a toddler and a middle-aged man carrying a leather briefcase.

The past four months have turned the unemployment center into one of the few places in Greenwood that is thriving. It added staff, extended hours and launched a series of seminars — “Market Yourself in One Minute,” “What



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

At OneStop, the unemployment office in Greenwood, job seekers use available computers to search job listings.

Employers Want” — for an estimated 3,500 job-seekers. “We have a lot of people coming in who have been laid off from companies where they worked for 20 or 30 years,” Burgess says. “They don’t have résumés. They don’t know computers. We are essentially teaching them how to look for jobs.”

This day, the center has posted nine new jobs on a dry-erase board attached to the wall — the longest list in more than a week. Hackett reads over the job titles and finds four that intrigue her: sales agent, machine operator, cleaning tech and customer service. She writes

down each job's six-digit serial number, which will enable her to search the computer for more complete descriptions.

Job 298342 is no longer available.

Job 315722 is for a CV 3-9 operator. Hackett reads the description. "Move large reels weighing 50 to 75 lbs. Stand for eight hours per eight-hour shift on a concrete floor. Bend/stoop to ground level thirty times per hour. Roll reels weighing 100 to 10,000 lbs. Pay: \$8."

Job 321273 is part time, eight hours per week at \$8.55 and located 16 miles away in Abbeville. Hackett does some quick math. "Minus gas, that's like \$20 a week," she says.

Job 318393 is the customer service position, which requires talking on the phone, making copies and other duties described as "secretarial." It pays \$9 an hour. Hackett once hoped to make at least \$10 with good benefits, but seven weeks of unemployment has diminished her standards.

"Sounds boring but okay," she says. "It could get me by for a little while."

She walks to the front counter of the center with the serial number and requests an application. While she waits, she notices a stack of fliers offering tips for job-seekers during hard times. On criminal backgrounds: "If you were arrested but not convicted, do not list it."

On salary expectations: "It may be best to write 'open' or 'negotiable.'" "

The front desk attendant calls for Hackett.

"This job is at Sykes, out at the mall," he says. "They need somebody immediately. I don't have an application here, because they want you to apply in person. If I were you, I'd go right away."

Hackett thanks him and walks out the door, optimistic. An immediate hire? Apply in person? "I think this could be something," Hackett tells her brother, and she spends the car ride to the mall planning ways to use her first few paychecks. She will pay off her cellphone bill, spoil herself with new sneakers, move out of her parents' house to stop inflating their electric bill — maybe even pay a few electric bills for them.


Hackett grabs a copy of her résumé, printed on watermarked paper, and walks into the Sykes telemarketing center. A receptionist hands her a clipboard with an application, and Hackett sits in a blue chair in the waiting room to fill it out. Under references, she lists Childs and some prior bosses. Under salary preference, she writes "Negotiable."

After 25 minutes that conclude with her shaking a tired right hand, Hackett signs the application and delivers it to

the receptionist, who promises to get in touch. Only after Hackett thanks her and turns for the exit does she notice the waiting room is now full. Six people sit with pens and clipboards, filling out the same application she just turned in. As she walks out, she forces a smile to hide what she already knows: She will never hear about the Sykes job again.

Later that night, inside the house on

Old Ninety-Six Highway, Childs sinks into the armless chair in her living room. "Don't bother me, Charles," she tells her husband. She picks up the cordless phone, where 17 new messages are waiting. One is from Hackett.

"Hi, it's me," she says. "Hope you had a good day. . . . No luck over here yet. I'm just wondering if you've heard about anything." 



BY LINDA DAVIDSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Evon Hackett fills out an application at GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission. It's one of many applications that she puts in each week. After battling breast cancer, Evon was laid off at her job and had to move back in with her parents.

Bruised by Stimulus Battle, Obama Changed His Approach To Washington

By SCOTT WILSON

First Published: April 29, 2009

THE NIGHT BEFORE the Senate vote on President Obama's \$787 billion stimulus bill, one question echoed through the West Wing:

Where is Arlen Specter?

The Republican senator from Pennsylvania would not answer his phone. Not for White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, Pennsylvania Gov. Edward G. Rendell (D) or Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), the Senate majority leader.

The president, a senator himself only a few months before, had spent weeks courting Specter. Obama had invited him to his Super Bowl party days earlier, gently teasing the prickly lawmaker about wearing a coat and tie to a relaxed social gathering. He had also brought Specter in for a 15-minute, one-on-one session in the Oval Office.

"This is the first president I've ever

met alone," Specter would later say of the meeting. "I'm just searching for the right word — it was unique."

With the vote only hours away, the job of finding the senator fell to Vice President Biden, who reached him by phone on the morning of the Feb. 13 vote. Soon after, Biden called Emanuel, who had been operating on virtually no sleep for several days, with the news: Specter would vote yes. In return for his support, Specter, who has Hodgkin's disease, won a large increase in cancer research funding for the National Institutes of Health.

"The dominoes," a senior adviser involved in the lobbying effort recalled, "began to fall into place."

Hours later, the Senate delivered the filibuster-proof 60 votes needed in favor of a measure that senior White House officials noted among themselves was more costly than the New Deal. For Specter, the vote represented a major step toward leaving the Republican Party, a de-



BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

President Obama addresses a joint session of Congress on Feb. 24. Even before taking office, he decided that he would challenge Washington to confront the nation's pressing problems all at once, arguing that they are intertwined.

fection he announced yesterday, putting Obama closer to being able to force his will in the Senate.

“While we passed the largest piece of domestic spending legislation in history, we went through 48 hours of not knowing if we were going to get anything at all,” said a senior administration official involved in the stimulus campaign. “In the end, you saw what a thin, thin, thin margin it was.”

During his first 100 days, Obama has

moved quickly to strengthen the U.S. economy, refine the American strategy in two foreign wars and reverse Bush-era detention and interrogation policies that have drawn condemnation at home and abroad. But his first weeks in office have also showed a president who, rather than changing Washington, as he pledged during his historic campaign, was being changed by it.

The near-defeat of his stimulus plan has emerged as the seminal learning ex-

perience for Obama and his fledgling administration, which came to Washington with equally high measures of ambition and confidence in its ability to quickly begin remaking the country. Along the way, Obama and his advisers, who had campaigned against Washington's insular politics, made several missteps that undermined their message of reform and helped stoke the capital's partisan traditions.

At the core of the misjudgment were poll-driven assumptions made by the president's senior advisers, many of them schooled in politics on Capitol Hill. Several believed that a fair number of Republican lawmakers would rally behind the nation's first African American president at a time of crisis, an assessment that proved wrong when only three GOP senators supported the stimulus measure and not a single House Republican followed suit.

But Obama and his advisers corrected course quickly. Drawing conclusions from a post-mortem analysis that Emanuel conducted of the stimulus battle, senior White House advisers returned to the successful tactics of the presidential campaign, taking the president and his message beyond the Beltway and scaling back his appeals to congressional Republicans. The approach has defined the way he has governed since.

A month after he nearly lost his stimulus bill, Obama faced another critical test in Congress, this time a vote on his \$3.5 trillion budget proposal. In preparation, he traveled outside Washington, appearing at town hall meetings, in prime-time news conferences and on late-night talk shows. One senior adviser said the president did not make a single call to a lawmaker seeking support for the budget blueprint, which is expected to gain final approval from Congress today.

"It's kind of like he decided 'I'm the boss,'" said Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.).

Even before taking office, Obama decided he would challenge Washington to confront all of the country's most pressing problems at the same time. He has used his first 100 days to begin marking out, through rhetoric and legislation, the way he believes Americans should receive health care, produce energy, spend and invest their money, and engage the world after a period of history during which he thinks the country veered far from its moral bearings.

His critics on the left say he has not gone far enough, whether in attempting to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or on social policy.

From the right, Obama has been criticized for not scaling back his expensive

domestic priorities despite a soaring national debt. His call-and-response diplomacy with Iran and Cuba, his appeal from a city square in Prague for a nuclear-free world and his prohibition of torture strike conservatives as a dangerously naive approach to a perilous world.

But few would argue that his decisions — to withdraw combat forces in Iraq by the end of August 2010, help cash-poor mortgage holders stay in their homes and confront the legacy of harsh detainee policies — have not changed the course of government. For the first time in five years, according to polls conducted this month, more Americans say the country is heading in the right direction than in the wrong one.

Late one evening, after a long day, one senior adviser said he joked with Obama about another president who inherited a country in dire economic straits, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

“I told him I had to give Roosevelt credit,” the adviser recalled. “He waited eight years before he had his war.”



BY JIM YOUNG — REUTERS

Obama greeted troops at Camp Victory in Baghdad during a surprise visit there April 7. He has set a timeline for troop withdrawal.

This account of Obama's first 100 days draws on interviews with more than a dozen senior administration officials, Cabinet members and congressional leaders who have participated directly in the most important policy debates of this stage-setting period.

Economy in Crisis

Over several days of meetings in mid-December, the president-elect and his advisers began to fathom the depth of the troubles ahead.

In Chicago, the administration-in-waiting gathered in a conference room

at the federal building, where the transition from campaign to government was underway.

First came a national security meeting, after which Obama remarked, according to a senior adviser present, “You know it’s bad when Iraq isn’t even the biggest worry out there.”

Then, on Dec. 16, the staff assembled to hear Christina Romer, Lawrence H. Summers, Timothy F. Geithner and others describe an economy in a state of near-free fall.

Romer, an MIT-educated economist, took on the role of selling Obama on the need for a much larger fiscal stimulus package than had been proposed.

She had charts, graphs and a sheaf of ominous economic indicators — “numbers we’d all been looking at our whole lives,” another senior adviser said, “and had never seen anything like before.”

Just three months earlier, as the global reach of the subprime mortgage crisis came into view, economists talked about the need for a fiscal stimulus of as much as \$150 billion. In internal conversations, the Obama transition team had concluded that the amount would have to be much larger.

On this day, Romer, Summers and others outlined a package of public

works spending, unemployment benefits expansion and tax cuts more than four times that size. The economy was contracting at an annual rate of 6.5 percent, the fastest since 1982.

During her presentation, Romer told Obama that Americans had yet to have their “holy [expletive]” moment over the economy, a phrase she had borrowed moments earlier from the more profane David Axelrod, Obama’s senior political adviser.

Obama was taken aback, and not just by the numbers. “I’m still trying to get my arms around the fact you said [expletive],” he told the bookish economist.

“I walked up to him afterward and said, ‘That has got to be about the worst meeting a president-elect has ever had,’” recalled Austan Goolsbee, a member of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, which Romer now heads. “He said, ‘That’s not even the worst meeting I’ve had this week.’”

Bumps in the Road

Obama, who was studying Roosevelt’s first 100 days, taking particular interest in how the former president sought to both comfort and brace the country as he took office, understood that in terms

of domestic policy he had become commander in chief already. He began talking directly to the country about the economy and how he intended to fix it.

He decided, his advisers say, that he would convey the idea that the nation's problems, from the retreating economy to falling student test scores, were intertwined as he pressed for action on a host of fronts simultaneously.

Mona Sutphen, the deputy chief of staff for policy, said the pre-inauguration period in Washington was used to "get intellectually ready" for such first steps as the signing of legislation on equal-pay and children's health insurance, an Iraq policy review, and executive orders closing the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and banning Bush-era interrogation tactics.

"As Rahm said, 'In Washington, you're either pitching balls or receiving balls. And we need to be pitching,'" Sutphen said. "We just didn't buy the notion that these things could wait."

In the days after the Jan. 20 inauguration, when Obama challenged the nation to "choose our better history," the administration confronted the challenge of new surroundings.

There were the new cellphone numbers no one else knew. E-mail accounts

that had yet to function. Virtually no support staff.

An initial goal of having Congress move the stimulus bill to his desk by Inauguration Day had faded, and Obama set Feb. 16 — Presidents' Day — as the new deadline. As he would note in a prime-time news conference five weeks later, "Obviously, at the inauguration, I think that there was justifiable pride on the part of the country that we had taken a step to move us beyond some of the searing legacies of racial discrimination in this country.

"But," he added, "that lasted about a day."

The work began on the fly. One of several of Obama's senior advisers who served in the Clinton administration noted that amid a far milder recession, President Bill Clinton pitched a \$25 billion spending bill, then cut it to \$16 billion in the face of opposition to its size. "We still lost," the adviser said.

Having arrived in Washington on a promise to promote bipartisanship, Obama began holding Wednesday night cocktail parties at the White House with lawmakers, events directed informally toward winning support for his stimulus bill.

He traveled to Capitol Hill to meet with the House and Senate Republican caucuses, as well as with conservative

Democrats who worried about the size of the measure.

“There was a huge outreach to congressional Republicans,” said Ray LaHood, a former GOP House member from Illinois who is now Obama’s transportation secretary.

Emanuel, who had chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee only months earlier, designed the legislative strategy. Phil Schiliro, a longtime Hill staff member picked to run Obama’s Office of Legislative Affairs, executed it.

“This is going to be the biggest vote in a whole bunch of members’ lives,” Goolsbee recalled Schiliro telling the senior staff. “Some are going to be new members, and they won’t have hired staff. So this is going to have a very high degree of difficulty.”

Republican House leaders recall a meeting in the West Wing’s Roosevelt Room days after the inauguration that, for them, set the tone for the rest of the debate.

The bill then emerging in the House, where Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) watched over it, had grown to \$825 billion. House Minority Leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) and Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.) urged the president to pare it back.

Obama said he would think over

their proposals, according to Republican lawmakers in the room. When Cantor pressed him to lower business-investment tax rates and reconsider the tax breaks for low-income families, Obama responded: “I won. So I think on that one, I trump you.”

“There was plenty of opportunity to incorporate some of our ideas, all of our ideas,” Boehner said later. Shortly after the House approved the bill along party lines, he said, “it became clear to us that they didn’t want to work with us.”

At the same time, one of Obama’s most important Cabinet nominees, former Senate majority leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.), nominated to run the Department of Health and Human Services and coordinate health-care reform, had run into trouble over the \$128,000 in back taxes he paid days before his confirmation hearings. The president, who a day after taking office had signed an executive order to ensure a more transparent government, stuck by Daschle for five days until he withdrew his nomination under pressure on Feb. 3.

“We internally overrode our best instincts on how something would play and how people would perceive it,” Axelrod said.

By then, the stimulus package had

grown to nearly \$900 billion. Conservative cable-news hosts carried the message daily that the bill had become the creation of the Hill's liberal Democratic leadership.

Axelrod, who is most responsible for designing the way the administration talks publicly about its agenda, said the debate had become muddled by claims of broken pledges of bipartisanship and the measure's growing cost.

"There was a sense this thing was beginning to cut against him," he said. "None of which was true. I mean, I'm

looking at polling, like, all the time. There was very consistent support for him out there. But that wasn't the story here."

Beyond the Beltway

Senate Republicans and Democrats began trimming the package, which had grown to \$930 billion, even as a new report showed that the economy had shed nearly 600,000 jobs in the month of Obama's inauguration.

"Everybody [in Congress] was very



BY BILL O'LEARY — THE WASHINGTON POST

In pushing the stimulus, one challenge for President Obama's team was finding a way to translate support outside the Beltway into votes in Congress.

concerned about the optics,” Axelrod recalled. “So the thing had to be under \$800 billion. It did fall in the guidelines the president originally set, but it was members who insisted on a rigid number.”

A few hours after the grim report was released, Obama flew to Camp David, seeking a breather from the frenzied lobbying and a first look at the presidential retreat.

On his return, Obama, after weeks of bipartisan outreach, jumped on Air Force One for town hall-style meetings in ailing Indiana and Florida. The campaign, in essence, began again.

“It was like we were living in an alternate universe in Washington,” Sutphen said. “That’s when we realized we had to lift this up, reconnect it to the urgency felt by everyone who didn’t read Roll Call.”

The calls of support began to come into congressional offices, not only from constituents but also from manufacturing groups, union members and Republican governors.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act won the 60 votes it needed in the Senate. Not one more.

“So you have one of the greatest legislative victories in history turned somehow into a semi-defeat,” a senior administration official said. “The lesson

is that we can’t measure our success by how many Republican votes we get. Our approach to the budget showed that. You just don’t mess around.”

Changing Tone

The administration was determined not to make the same mistakes on Obama’s budget proposal, a far-reaching statement of where he intends to take the country. Informed by the stimulus experience, Obama embarked from the start on an approach that largely ignored Washington.

But the administration, which had evolved from a campaign team that relied on an army of volunteers, had yet to establish a way to bring the sentiment “out there” into the halls of Congress.

“We clearly didn’t have the politics right about how to deal with the outside game,” said a senior administration official who previously worked on the Hill. “I think there was an assumption based on a huge electoral landslide . . . that Republicans would at least find some good politics in working with the president.”

As it took office, the administration had planned to give Obama’s formidable grass-roots political network what one senior adviser called “a few months off”

after the grueling campaign season. David Plouffe, Obama's campaign manager and an informal White House adviser, had informed the president's senior advisers that "we had really run our people into the ground," according to one of them.

"It became very clear we couldn't do that," the senior official said of the planned rest for their troops in the field, adding that the administration began spending "way more time trying to figure the outside of it out to give us some cover" as the budget debate began.

As his administration began selling the budget, a distraction arose. The Washington Post reported on March 16 that American International Group, the insurance giant that had received \$170 billion in government funding to avoid collapse, would pay out \$165 million in executive bonuses.

According to a senior adviser who was in the meeting when Obama was told about the bonuses — days before they became public — the president responded, "You've got to be kidding."

Obama and his aides explored what could be done to block the bonus payments. But there was a difference of opinion between Obama's more politically minded advisers, who anticipated how explosive the matter could become,

and his economic advisers, who believed that the administration should honor the contracts and move on.

One senior administration official said Geithner did not initially believe that the issue was serious enough for him to bring it up directly with the president.

"There's always been this sort of weird conversation back and forth between the finance guys, who come from that world," said one senior adviser involved in the first meetings. "Their thing is, 'We get all that [anger], but the fact is this is the way the system works on Wall Street.'"

In a March 18 town hall forum in Orange County, Calif., the president told an audience of unemployed teachers, labor officials, students and others that "these bonuses, as outrageous as they are, are a symptom of a much larger problem."

"And that's the system and culture that made them possible — a culture where people made enormous sums of money, taking irresponsible risks that have now put the entire economy at risk," he said.

The West Coast trip was one of several designed for Obama to pitch his budget plan, which includes long-term funding for such top domestic priorities as expanding health-care coverage, creating a clean-energy industry and improving public education. The trip included two

town hall meetings and an appearance on “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno,” a venue never used before by a sitting president.

This time, Obama paid little attention to how many Republican lawmakers signed on to his budget plan, and it passed by a far larger margin than the White House anticipated.

“He changed his tone on the budget,” said Isakson, the Republican senator from Georgia. “He went from being more suggestive in his tone of what he might want to do, to declaratory in terms of saying, ‘This is what we are going to do, and this is why.’”

Team Obama

Another story has played out over these 100 days. An African American couple has moved two young daughters from Chicago and begun transforming a historic residence into their home.

The Obamas moved from the Hyde Park neighborhood to Washington the first week of January, earlier than most first families arrive. There was a new school for the girls to prepare for. On Jan. 5, Sasha, her hair in pigtails, and Malia, her hair in twists, said goodbye to Dad and headed from the Hay-Adams Hotel to Sidwell Friends School.

In settling in, they picked a play-ground set and a puppy named Bo, who two weeks ago attended a meeting of the president’s senior economic advisers. Family dinners have often provided Obama an evening respite before he crosses from the East Wing to the West Wing, a border between family and work that first lady Michelle Obama is trying hard to enforce.

The Obamas have searched for a church, traveled to elementary school basketball games by motorcade and attended parent-teacher conferences for their daughters. Michelle Obama also plays a part in the West Wing — as senior adviser for encouragement and solace. On days she identifies as particularly difficult for her husband, she will make an unannounced visit to the Oval Office.

The president also began to carve out his own routine.

An avid basketball player, Obama brought in a personal trainer from Chicago, with whom aides say he works out four times a week. He has also sought to end the eat-at-your-desk Washington culture embraced by his senior aides — targeting their waistlines and cholesterol counts.

Obama offers the trainer to his senior advisers, too, needling Axelrod and Pete Rouse in particular to get on the tread-

mill. The first lady pushes the same health and nutrition ethos in the East Wing that the president does in the West.

“The president has mentioned to all of us that he knows we’re under stress. He knows that we don’t eat well,” said Robert Gibbs, his press secretary. “If we want to use a trainer, he’s got a good one.”

On the morning of April 17, during the president’s trip to Mexico City, Gibbs surprised the president by appearing in the gym of the InterContinental Hotel. Obama had rarely, if ever, seen his press secretary in workout gear.

“He just looked at me and said, ‘This is a good thing, Gibbs,’” he recalled.

At the same time, the team in the White House has been transforming itself.

During the stimulus campaign, Obama’s senior staff began to assume distinct roles in West Wing, with Emanuel, in the words of one adviser, serving as the “field general.”

The spiritual center of the senior staff is the crew of campaign veterans from



BY BILL O'LEARY — THE WASHINGTON POST

President Obama met with economic advisers from the administration and Congress on Feb. 25 to discuss the crisis.

Chicago, namely Valerie Jarrett and Axelrod. One senior adviser, who is among a group of former Clinton administration officials, said the Chicago team “claims some ownership of the president and tries its best to keep the campaign spirit alive” in the White House.

Next to Emanuel, Axelrod has assumed the broadest portfolio, participating in the most important national security meetings, largely as an observer, and in such pivotal economic meetings as the March 26 gathering in which Obama decided to fire G. Richard Wagoner Jr.,

the chief executive of General Motors. “He sees his role here as implementing Obama-ism, not trying to mitigate it or moderate it for political expedience,” said another senior adviser. “He believes that if the president can fulfill what he ran on, he’ll be just fine politically.”

Jarrett, a longtime family friend and Obama’s liaison to the business world, is, in the words of another senior adviser, the president’s “institutional memory.” While Axelrod knows how Obama will want to talk about an issue, this adviser said, “Valerie knows how he feels about it.”

Obama, a former law professor, encourages debate among his advisers, asking them to stake out opposing positions and often pushing rivals to argue their points further as he listens. He listens to everyone in the room before presenting his own view and decision.

“Then,” the adviser said, “the meeting is over.”

From the vantage of his inner circle, the new president has stepped into the role by projecting a sense of calm and confidence. The “no-drama Obama” campaign mantra has been adopted by Obama the president, sometimes through glimmers of humor during serious times.

While visiting Prague this month, Obama was awakened with news that

North Korea had fired a long-range missile, and he joined Axelrod and Mark Lippert, the National Security Council chief of staff, in a secure room in their hotel to discuss the development. Looking at Axelrod, his hair suffering from an acute case of bedhead, and Lippert, who had thrown on a pair of shorts, Obama quipped: “I don’t know which is more frightening — your hair, Lippert’s legs or this launch. I’ve got to think about this.”

At home and abroad, Obama has used his first 100 days to signal a change from his predecessors, and he is drawing on his strength outside Washington to turn his plans into policy. But Washington, where for years parochial interests have shaped the agenda and incremental steps have marked the pace, is also working on him as he turns to the next phase of what he intends to be a transformational presidency.

“President Clinton bought into the idea very early in his administration that ‘the system’ could only handle one thing at a time,” said a senior adviser who also worked in the last Democratic administration. “President Obama decided very early on to lay out as much as possible and move ahead. The jury is still out on whether that is going to be successful.”



How It Came Down to This: 244 Democrats, 0 Republicans



BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

Meeting the press after the stimulus bill passed the House without a single GOP vote, Rep. Candice Miller (Mich.) talks alongside fellow Republican lawmakers, from left, Mike Pence (Ind.), John Boehner (Ohio) and Eric Cantor (Va.).

By PERRY BACON JR.

First Published: April 29, 2009

REPS. MICHAEL N. CASTLE (Del.) and Fred Upton (Mich.) sat side by side in the House chamber during the final vote on the economic stimulus package, each exhausted by the barrage of rhetoric from Democrats and fellow Republicans.

The longtime friends, both moder-

ates in an increasingly polarized House, were two of about 10 Republicans who had signaled they would even consider backing the bill at the center of President Obama's agenda.

The measure's passage in the House on that day in February was ensured, but Obama had campaigned on reducing division in Washington and wanted to secure at least some GOP support. House Republican leaders sought to

reject the bill with a unified no.

That left Castle and Upton in the middle, enduring numerous meetings and calls from Obama aides and House GOP leaders. Castle had been invited to two Super Bowl parties: Vice President Biden's at the Naval Observatory and Obama's at the White House. Citing family commitments, he declined both.

But Upton, who also had been invited

to the White House, brought his 17-year-old son, Stephen, to watch the game with Obama and other Washington officials.

"It was like going to the neighbor whose house you always wanted to be invited to who has the best TV on the block," Upton said of the bash.

He also rode on Air Force One a few days later when he joined the president on a trip to Elkhart, Ind., a town just

Last year, Obama itemized actions he would take to recharge the economy. The \$785 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contained many of these ideas, rejected others and inserted new ones such as Head Start funding and more help for unemployed workers.

KEY PLEDGES



Fulfilled



Partly



No

SOURCE: Blueprint for Change

Taxes and tax credits

Included in the stimulus?

Windfall profits tax to fund a \$1,000 emergency energy rebate

Removed from the agenda before Obama was in office

Tax cut of \$500 per taxpayer or \$1,000 per family

A two-year credit of \$400 or \$800

Tax credit for the first \$4,000 of college education, in return for 100 hours of community service

A maximum of \$2,500 partly refundable tax credit, to expire in 2010, with no community service requirement

Refundable child care tax credit

Made more of the credit refundable

Mortgage credit of 10% to people who don't itemize

Not in stimulus but has been proposed elsewhere

Create tax credit for hiring new workers

Rejected by lawmakers as unworkable

Nearly double the write-off for small-business investments

Got exactly what he wanted

Eliminate capital gains on small business

Removes capital gains on 75% of small-business profits

STIMULUS

south of Upton's district. The president had taken to the road to appeal to Congress to quickly pass his proposal.

House Republican leaders focused on the battles of Upton's home district in Michigan, the heart of the ailing automobile industry. The congressman and Rep. Candice S. Miller, another moderate Republican from Michigan, had pushed an \$11.5 billion provision that would allow tax breaks for new-car purchases, a

proposal they hoped would spur sales.

But the final bill included only \$1.6 billion for the program, so on the day of the vote GOP leaders arranged for Miller to introduce a measure that would increase the funding. That was going to be hard, given that House Democrats had negotiated the exact amount of the overall stimulus bill with the Senate. Democrats rejected the effort.

House Minority Whip Eric Cantor

Last year, Obama itemized actions he would take to recharge the economy. The \$785 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contained many of these ideas, rejected others and inserted new ones such as Head Start funding and more help for unemployed workers.

KEY PLEDGES



Fulfilled



Partly



No

SOURCE: Blueprint for Change

STIMULUS

Spending

Included in the stimulus?

\$25 billion aid to states to replace state and local property taxes

\$40 billion (schools), \$8.8 billion (other)
\$86 billion (extra Medicaid matching funds)

\$25 billion for repairing schools and rebuilding roads and bridges, promising 1 million jobs

Nearly \$100 billion in infrastructure and construction spending, promising 400,000 jobs

Another \$25 billion in loan guarantees for auto industry retooling

The retooling money was not passed, but other help was given to automakers

Extend unemployment insurance for 13 additional weeks

Extended and increased

Penalty-free withdrawal of 401(k) and IRA money; regulation allowing delay in mandatory withdrawals

A December law mandated this change, freeing it from the stimulus bill

Increase low-income home energy assistance

Failed in Congress, but weatherization included

(Va.), the man leading the GOP opposition to the package, was also aware that securing Castle and Upton's votes might hinge on making sure that no other Republicans backed the legislation. So in the hours before the vote, Cantor and other GOP leaders were in constant contact with possible GOP supporters of the bill, such as Rep. Anh "Joseph" Cao (La.), a newcomer from New Orleans who defeated incumbent William J. Jefferson (D) in a special election in an Obama stronghold. They explained their concerns about the stimulus package and stressed the importance of opposing it.

Once the voting officially started, most members of Congress quickly cast their votes and then stood in the front of the chamber with their colleagues.

But Castle and Upton just sat beside each other in the center aisle, chatting and taking in the moment.

When a House GOP leader approached to remind them again how important it was to oppose the bill, Upton says he told him to "leave us alone."

Instead, as the clock ran down on the 15 minutes that members are allotted to vote on a measure, the pair realized that several other members — Democrats and Republicans — were staring at them.

"The spotlight was on us," Upton joked.


"We were enjoying our 15 minutes of fame."

Finally they cast their votes. Both men said they had largely settled on "no" days before, believing that the country needed a fiscal stimulus measure but that the legislation before them included too much spending on efforts that would not directly improve the economy.

"A good stimulus package is something we should have done, my feeling was that program was not well put together," Castle said.

Neither Castle nor Upton was sure that all 177 Republicans would oppose the bill. They realized quickly, however, the impact that a unified opposition would have.

Castle is not a cynic about bipartisanship, saying that he thinks the White House is sincere about bipartisanship and hopes it continues to reach out, but that he has no illusions about Democrats or Republicans in Washington: "I'm not giving the Republicans a lot of credit for being particularly bipartisan over the years, either."

Of the Democrats, he added: "Sometimes it's a lot easier to call Nancy Pelosi and Senator [Harry M.] Reid and say, 'Let's get this done,' and not worry about scurrying up Republicans. I would imagine the vote on the stimulus didn't help, because they worked that and they didn't get anything, so why bother?" 

ANALYSIS

From the Start, Putting a Bold Stamp on the White House

By DAN BALZ

First Published: April 29, 2009

THERE HAS BEEN nothing tentative about President Obama's first 100 days in office. The defining characteristics of his presidency have been his appetite for leadership, the breadth of his ambitions and his determination to pass his programs in the face of united Republican opposition.

Some presidents start slowly. Obama began to lead even before he was sworn in, responding to a deepening recession by promoting an \$800 billion stimulus package designed to prevent the economy from becoming even worse. He has set in motion so many initiatives — domestic and international — that his top advisers know that one of their biggest challenges will be to prevent the many pieces of his agenda from crashing into one another before they can be enacted and begin to work.

For this fast start he has been re-

warded with approval ratings that exceed those of his predecessors — two in three Americans approve of the job he is doing — and serious questions about the long-term implications of his multifront agenda. As historian Robert Dallek noted, “I don't think you can point to anything at the end of 100 days that will give you a clear indication of how we're going to see the president's performance at the end of four years.”

No presidency is truly defined in its first 100 days, but there are clear insights into a new leader's temperament, governing style and political philosophy that can provide a guide to the future. For Obama, the transition from presidential candidate to Oval Office occupant has begun to answer some of the contradictions that persisted through his long quest for the White House.

One of those was how Obama would resolve the tension between his talk of a post-partisan governing style and the substance of an agenda that tilted

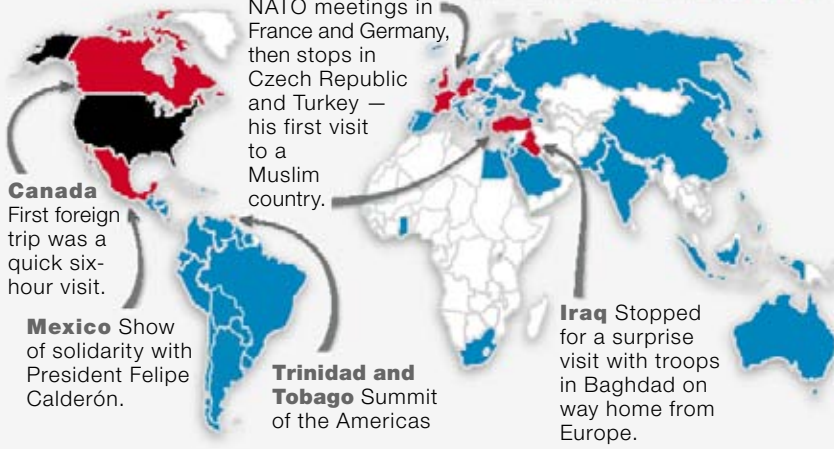
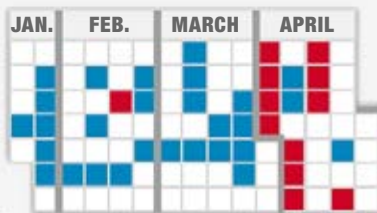
clearly in the direction of liberal, activist government. "Now it's clearer that Barack Obama was actually serious about the agenda he was advancing, and now as president he's trying to move it — in fact, move it all," said William A. Galston of the Brookings Institution. "If that means a lost opportunity for more substantive bipartisanship and a change in tone in Washington, that's a trade-off he and the people around him

are willing to accept."

Obama also has answered definitively the question of which would take priority — enacting the broad agenda of health care, energy reform and education that he championed throughout the campaign or responding to the economic crisis that hit in full force as the campaign was ending. Many analysts questioned whether he could do both, given the fiscal implications they

DIPLOMACY/DEFENSE

- **Obama spoke to/met with leader**
- **Obama visited country**



would entail. Obama has decided not to choose between them, and he used a recent speech at Georgetown University to argue the case that short-term stimulus without long-term structural reforms of major parts of the economy risks a return to bubble economics.

Given all the activity, Obama's first 100 days have often been compared to those of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. But historian David M. Kennedy, who wrote a major work on the Depression, said Obama's opening months differ from Roosevelt's in one important way. "They are putting things on the table now that are very comprehensive changes of the sort that Roosevelt didn't bring forward for a

couple of years," Kennedy said. Roosevelt "had a general idea of what he wanted to accomplish, but it took him a while to put it all together," he added.

Obama's ambitions have been revealed through the pursuit of his agenda. His appetite for governing is clear from the way he has talked about the presidency; aides say his goal is to be a transformational president. His most revealing comments came Feb. 27 in an interview with PBS's Jim Lehrer. "I think that we are at an extraordinary moment that is full of peril, but full of possibility," Obama said. "And I think that's the time you want to be president. . . . This is when the political system starts to move effectively."

DIPLOMACY/DEFENSE

KEY PLEDGES



Fulfilled



Partially



No substantial action taken


Before presidency


Move troops from Iraq to Afghanistan; remove two brigades a month from Iraq to end most involvement by summer 2010.


Secure all loose nuclear material in the world within four years and negotiate a global ban on production of new nuclear weapons materials.

One of Obama's first acts will be reversing a 2003 provision limiting veterans' health benefits to the poor.

What he has done

 In February, Obama said he would send 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan and plans to remove two brigades by the summer of 2009.

 Obama reiterated the pledge in a speech in Prague hours after North Korea fired a test rocket into the ocean.

 Obama is implementing a law that requires VA to reverse the policy, passed last year.

Left unresolved is the question of Obama's political ideology. His first 100 days have produced much talk but little consensus on that question. His most conservative critics call him a socialist, and other Republicans warn that he has begun a dangerous experiment with big-government liberalism. Some Democrats describe him as progressive; White House officials see him as pragmatic, responding to the hand he was dealt.


His economic policies amount to a huge increase in government spending and a major intervention by the government into the economy — owning big stakes in financial institutions and possibly General Motors; ordering the dismissal of corporate executives; trying to set executive compensation. Whether this is seen by Obama as a necessary but distasteful response to the size of the economic problem he inherited or an underlying belief in the effectiveness of the federal government will be known only later.

Conservative strategist and writer Daniel Casse sees Obama as a moderate with liberal tendencies, but not at heart an ideologue. His ambitions, he said, may be large in scope but not necessarily in detail. By which he means: Will

Obama really attempt to restructure the auto unions; will he do more than complain about executive pay?

Stylistically, Obama appears comfortable in the presidency. One aide described the White House under Obama as a place of serious deliberation, without the chaos that sometimes descends on a new administration.

In an administration that includes major personalities such as Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, there is no doubt who is setting the tone. He is explainer in chief, advocate in chief, initiator in chief. "He believes effective communication is close to the core of an effective 21st century presidency," Galston said. "That doesn't mean that if you do it well, you'll succeed, but if you don't do it well, you won't. The jury is out on whether overexposure will set in."

Republicans disagree with the substance of Obama's economic policies and have bet that those policies will look more questionable in a year or two than they do at the moment. That is why the jury is out on much of Obama's presidency. It will be months before the public begins to judge whether he has delivered the results he is promising. But in his first 100 days, Obama has already revealed much about himself. 

Is FDR-Era Yardstick Still Relevant?



BY RICHARD A. LIPSKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

A top Obama aide has dismissed the idea of a 3½-month report card, yet the White House is marking the milestone.

By PHILIP RUCKER

First Published: April 29, 2009

IT WAS MARCH 4, 1933, and Franklin D. Roosevelt was being sworn in as president after his Democratic Party

assumed control of the levers of power in a country deeply troubled by a historic economic collapse.

Over the next 3½ months, he would amass a slew of legislative victories, help set in motion the recovery from the

'It's completely artificial and of very little use in thinking about any presidency.'

— Presidential historian Douglas Brinkley

Great Depression and establish a new yardstick for chief executives.

Roosevelt accomplished so much during his first 100 days in office, presidential historians have said, that the period soon became the common barometer by which future presidents — including Barack Obama — would be measured.

"After the first 100 days of FDR, because so much happened, not only the laws he got passed, but he had changed the mood of the country so they felt more positive and he set the tone for what would become the administration ... it's part of our culture to be measuring this," said historian Doris Kearns Goodwin. "It's the first measuring mark."

But as critics view President Obama's record through the 100-day prism, some historians are questioning whether the measuring point has any value.

Historian Ron Chernow, who has written biographies of Alexander Hamilton and John D. Rockefeller, said it is

unfair to compare the early months of any president, including Obama's, to those of Roosevelt.

"When FDR became president, the economic situation was so dire that there was a quasi-revolutionary atmosphere in the country," Chernow said. "So I think that that becomes an unfair yardstick by which to judge Obama. In 1933, what was ideologically possible was much greater than today simply because the degree of despair was much greater. People really don't know how far they want to push reform or how deep-seated the problems are in the country."

Presidential historian Douglas Brinkley of Rice University said there is a "100-days mania going on where all media outlets are trying to out-100-days the other."

Said Princeton historian Sean Wilentz: "Historically, it's just kind of crazy. I think it's completely artificial and of very little use in thinking about any presidency. By the same token, you

can talk about what a president has been doing and how a president's early days have gone, and that to me is perfectly all right. But these benchmarks are silly."

David Axelrod, a senior adviser to Obama, calls the 100th day a made-up "Hallmark holiday" and has dismissed it as an old Washington custom of evaluating administrations. Nonetheless, the White House scheduled a presidential visit to St. Louis and a prime-time news conference to mark the occasion.

In March 2001, President George W. Bush's political adviser, Karl Rove, and chief of staff, Andrew H. Card Jr., summoned presidential historians to the White House to ask how best to present the commander in chief's record over the first 100 days, recalled one of the historians, Fred I. Greenstein of Princeton. They were "asking about the hokey 100-days stories," Greenstein said.


President John F. Kennedy was wary of being critiqued for his first 100 days. In his 1961 inaugural address, he outlined an ambitious agenda but warned: "All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin."

Goodwin, who has written about

Kennedy's presidency, said that even as a candidate he chafed against the 100-day barometer. "There was a time during the campaign when he had a draft of a speech in which he put out all the goals," she said. "He slashed out the '100 days' and said: 'Make it 1,000. I don't want to be up against that mark.' But, of course, the 1,000 days would mark his life."

Within his first three months in office, for instance, Kennedy ordered the U.S. invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, which was widely regarded as a foreign policy mistake. "You wouldn't want to judge the Kennedy presidency on the basis of the Bay of Pigs alone," Wilentz said.

Still, historians said, the 100th day offers the frenetic Obama administration a moment to pause.

"The pace of life in the White House is such that you often don't get the chance to reflect on what's going on because you're moving from one crisis to another," Goodwin said. "So to the extent that we've got this marker, it may allow the people in the White House to be able to think about why the things that worked went well and how can we improve them and, where we made mistakes, how can we avoid doing them again." 

What Historians Say

We surveyed an assortment of presidential historians, who arrived at the same conclusion: President Obama, in both the scope of his legislative achievements and the groundwork he has set for future policy changes, has done more in his first 100 days in the White House than any commander in chief since Franklin D. Roosevelt, who entered office in 1933 amid the throes of the nation's last major economic upheaval. Here are selected quotations from historians and other observers.

AMBITIOUS » “There is a mixture of boldness and measuredness about his performance. He’s asking for the sun, the moon and the stars. . . . It’s enormously ambitious in many ways, and that makes you think back to the last real economic-disaster presidency, which was Franklin D. Roosevelt.”

— **Fred I. Greenstein**, *historian at Princeton University and author of “The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style From FDR to George W. Bush”*

QUICK SUCCESS » “History will judge that he has been astonishingly successful in his first 100 days. The stimulus package helped push major investment in education and health care and seems

to have stemmed the collapse of our economy. His push for education reform is going to have a lasting impact on America’s education system. The ability to open up and deal directly with adversaries around the world transforms the way we conduct foreign policy and could lead to important breakthroughs, whether in Cuba or Iran. And he has set a tone that is both open yet also persistent in pursuing his goals.”

— **Walter Isaacson**, *president of the Aspen Institute and author of biographies of Albert Einstein, Benjamin Franklin and Henry Kissinger*

TOO EARLY TO TELL » “He’s done well, but in a lot of areas you just can’t tell. . . . On the most important issue



ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Franklin D. Roosevelt — who, like President Obama, faced a major economic crisis — delivers his first radio “fireside chat” in March 1933.

facing the country today, which is not just the economy but the banks and how to deal with the banking crisis and the credit crisis, I think we’re still a long way from knowing how that will play itself out.”

— **Sean Wilentz**, *historian at Princeton University and author of “The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008”*

FAST START » “When you look at the Roosevelt administration, Roosevelt moved very quickly, too, to try to set the country back on economic footing. My sense is that Barack Obama has

moved as quickly or more quickly as anybody in American history, given the crises he has confronted.”

— **Ronald Walters**, *historian and director of the African American Leadership Center at the University of Maryland*

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL » “I think he’s the global president. People all over the world just want to shake his hand, they want to have a photo op with him. There’s a sense that he’s a historic figure, not just a one-termer. . . . His mettle hasn’t really been tested in foreign affairs yet, but he’s created a foundation

with which to work with other countries in the world quite well.”

— **Douglas Brinkley**, *historian at Rice University and editor of President Ronald Reagan's White House diaries*

NEW IDEAS » “Across the board, he has signaled a willingness to rethink even deeply entrenched policies. There is a freshness and openness about this administration that is very engaging. If you just look at what happened with Cuba this week in terms of how many American presidents have been frozen in fear on the subject of Cuba, and then suddenly Obama is able to suggest a thaw and a rethinking of our policy toward Cuba and a relaxation of our attitude. . . . I think that he's been very fearless and not bound by old orthodoxies. I think that the speed with which he changed the policy on stem cell research shows how open he is to new ideas.”

— **Ron Chernow**, *historian and author of biographies of Alexander Hamilton and John D. Rockefeller*

EASY MANNER » “I think we've learned important things about him. When he's made a misstep, as he did with [Thomas A.] Daschle, he took the respon-

sibility for it, which means you learn what went wrong so you don't do it again. He's trying to figure out many ways of communicating with the country, because that's his ultimate strength. We've learned that he knows how to relax and enjoy himself and really figure out ways to replenish his energies, whether it's making sure that his schedule fits his needs by making time for his children at breakfast, going out to dinners with his wife in Washington, the basketball bracket.”

— **Doris Kearns Goodwin**, *historian and author of "Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln"*

OUTREACH » “I'd give him an A for effort and a B for effectiveness. He's had a difficult time working both sides of the aisle. He's tried to reach out to the opposition, not with a great deal of success. He hasn't been quite as successful and effective as I would like to see, but even with that I give him a great deal of credit for the effort he's made and his willingness to reach across the aisle and not be partisan in everything.”

— **Edna Greene Medford**, *historian at Howard University who specializes in 19th-century African American history*

Communicator in Chief Has A Tone for Every Situation

By ALEC MACGILLIS

First Published: April 29, 2009

FROM THE START, the orator who had reached the White House based in no small part on his eloquence made it clear that he would not necessarily be delivering the same soaring stuff as he did in his campaign.

“What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility,” Barack Obama said in a conspicuously earthbound inaugural address. “A recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties . . . that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.”

But President Obama's turn of the



BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

[ON WASHINGTONPOST.COM/100DAYS](http://ON.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/100DAYS)



Obama has used his extraordinary rhetorical skills to help set the tone during the tumultuous first 100 days of his administration.

dial did not mean he would relinquish the powers of rhetoric. Far from it. His first 100 days have been marked by the omnipresence of Obama the communicator — in speeches, news conferences, stump appearances, weekly YouTube addresses and even late-night TV.

But after zero House Republicans voted for the measure, he struck a feistier tone at a House Democratic retreat. “Then you get the argument, ‘Well, this is not a stimulus bill, it’s a spending bill,’ “ he said, smiling ironically and raising his hands in chiding, Italian-uncle fashion. “What do you think a stimulus is? That’s the whole point!”

He carried a similarly spirited tone onto the road, as he fled Washington for town hall meetings that echoed the campaign. In Elkhart, Ind., he sympa-

thized with those hurt by the recession — “young people who put that college acceptance back in the envelope because they just can’t afford it” — and derided the opposition, pointing his finger for emphasis: “We can’t posture and bicker and resort to the same failed ideas that got us into this mess in the first place. That was what this election was all about!”

To goad action, Obama spoke in dark tones about the economy — too dark, some said. “If you delay acting on

REVERSALS

KEY PLEDGES



Fulfilled



Partially



No substantial action taken

Before presidency

Reject torture without equivocation; close Guantanamo Bay and secret prisons.

Amend executive orders to make sure that all contact between all White House staff and outsiders on regulatory matters is open.

Sign legislation restoring some rights to sue against pay discrimination and reauthorizing a health-care program for disadvantaged children.

What he has done

All of Obama's promises on detainee treatment have been addressed. The Guantanamo prison remains in operation while the administration considers how to close it.

No executive order has been issued. The OMB has reported nine meetings with outside groups related to regulations. The transition posted all recommendations from outsiders on its Web site.

Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Act on pay in his second week in office, and the children's health-care bill on Feb. 4.

an economy of this severity, then you potentially create a negative spiral that becomes much more difficult for us to get out of,” he said in his first presidential news conference, where his answers were in-depth and almost professorial in nature. “This is not your ordinary run-of-the-mill recession. We are going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.”


Two weeks later, he shifted to a more optimistic tone in his joint address to Congress. “We are not quitters,” he said. “Even in the most trying times, amid the most difficult circumstances, there is a generosity, a resilience, a decency, and a determination that perseveres.”

Obama carried the buoyant tone further in his March appearances on “60 Minutes” and “The Tonight Show.” He bantered with Jay Leno about life in the bubble, leaning in comfortably on the couch, but his levity also produced an unfortunate quip about the Special Olympics.

And by then, the ground had shifted to the point where severity was again called for: Cable news was in an uproar over the American International Group bonuses, and Obama decided he needed to share the anger. “How do they justify this outrage to taxpayers?” he

said at the White House on March 16. A week later, amid worries that the flames were getting out of control, he offered a more judicious tone in his second news conference: “The rest of us can’t afford to demonize every investor or entrepreneur who seeks to make a profit.”

His trip to Europe demanded its own nuance — putting on a friendlier face to the world without overdoing it. “There’s been times where America’s shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive,” he said in Strasbourg, France. “But in Europe, there is an anti-Americanism that is at once casual but can also be insidious. Instead of recognizing the good that America so often does in the world, there have been times that Europe chooses to blame America for much of what’s bad.”

Back in the States, he delivered a speech at Georgetown University on April 14 that summed up his emerging agenda. Much had happened since the inauguration, but the address carried the same sober tone as he had that day — a tone that appears likely to be the dominant one amid an array of voices that he will rely on moving forward. “We cannot rebuild this economy on the same pile of sand,” he said. “We must build our house upon a rock.” 

Making Themselves At Home Beyond the White House Walls

By RICHARD LEIBY

First Published: April 29, 2009

THE WORKER BEES of federal Washington — people like Mazzie Simmons of Waldorf, who commutes 30 miles to her desk as a retirement specialist at the Office of Personnel Management — don't expect to hear high praise from the White House, or from anyone else, for that matter. "Nobody ever comes to say, 'Thank you for what you people do,'" she says.

Until, that is, Michelle Obama dropped by the agency last week, shook hands with hundreds of civil servants and lauded their dedication. In her 35 years in government, Simmons had never seen such a thing. Obama, a political rock star and fashion sensation worldwide, impressed Simmons as a down-to-earth woman who has "the interest of people at heart."

It was the ninth time the first lady had come to a federal agency, always to tumultuous welcome, to deliver a pep talk.



BY LOIS RAIMONDO — THE WASHINGTON POST

The president takes in a Wizards-Bulls game.

From the auditorium stage, she told the bureaucrats that such visits give her the chance "to better understand not just the work that you do but the lives that you live."

Political hype? To a degree. But in their extraordinary outreach to ordinary local people, the Obamas have made themselves known to Washington in a way that no first couple has in modern memory — crossing lines of race, class and power since moving into the White House.

“It’s been nothing short of incredible,” says Mayor Adrian Fenty. “It’s really an unprecedented level of energy and commitment to Washington, D.C., and the issues that are important to the people who live here. It brings an excitement to the city that I haven’t seen before, and I’ve lived here my whole life.”

Locals know that Washington isn’t one city but three. There is the federal core with its marble monuments and hives of government toilers. There are the leafy enclaves of the prosperous class, mainly in Northwest. And then there’s the sprawling “other” Washington where poverty and crime persist.

Together or separately, the president and his wife have paid attention to all



BY LOIS RAIMONDO — THE WASHINGTON POST

Reaching out, getting a hand: The first lady gardens at the White House with a Bancroft Elementary student.

three — but considerably more than their predecessors to low-income neighborhoods. They’ve staged events at public schools and community centers. On the service day held before the inauguration, he wielded a paintbrush at Sa-

sha Bruce Youthwork, an emergency shelter for teens; last month she dished out risotto to the homeless at Miriam's Kitchen.

And today, Michelle Obama has invited Jill Biden and a small army of congressional spouses and kids to bag food at the Capital Area Food Bank for distribution to a thousand school children who depend on the program to eat.

Besides do-gooder events, the first couple are also prone to spontane-

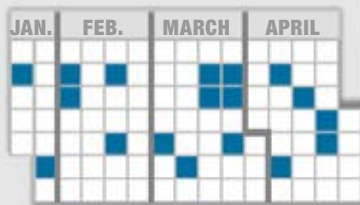
ous, we're-just-folks outings: There's the president sitting courtside at Verizon Center, watching the Chicago Bulls; there's the first lady and her staff having burgers at Five Guys in Dupont Circle. Michelle Obama also expands her social circle on the weekends, cheering on her daughters at soccer and basketball games along with other parents.

"They are trying to become familiar with all of Washington," says longtime resident and Democratic strategist Don-

ENERGY/ENVIRONMENT

Administration actions

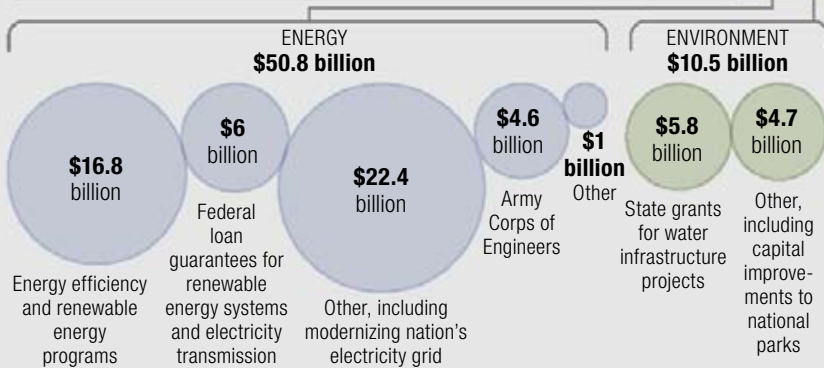
on energy and environment



Stimulus spending

on energy and environment

Total stimulus spending: \$575 billion



na Brazile. "They're good neighbors."

Not long after his election, Barack Obama spoke of wanting to "open up the White House," and his wife talked of "contributing to the community." As first ladies often do, Michelle Obama has taken up the mantle of goodwill emissary and cheerleader for her husband's agenda. Doing so has pushed her to the forefront of community engagement. Along with introducing herself to thousands of federal workers, she has invited several hundred kids from low-income neighborhoods to White House events.

At a White House bill-signing in February, Brazile says she approached Michelle Obama and said, "Madame first lady, don't forget Anacostia. Many people often forget about the kind of places where we grew up."

As African Americans who did community and nonprofit work in Chicago, the Obamas were already inclined to push themes of public service and volunteerism. But as outsiders, they needed connections to help turn words into deeds. How do you find the youth conservation group to plant trees with

KEY PLEDGES



Fulfilled



Partially



No substantial action taken

ENERGY/ENVIRONMENT

Before presidency

Spend \$150 billion over 10 years for investments such as biofuels, plug-in hybrids, low-emission coal plants and renewable energy.

Implement cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse emissions 80 percent by 2050.

Expand community-service efforts with a Clean Energy Corps and an energy-focused jobs program for disadvantaged youth.

What he has done



It appears that Obama is on track to fulfill this pledge. The stimulus contains more than \$50 billion for the next two years, and he has made the issue a priority



The House has started debating it, but Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Earth Day that she hopes there is progress by next year at this time.



The stimulus package has \$500 million for retraining programs, but the budget contains no mention of the corps or the jobs program.



BY BILL O'LEARY — THE WASHINGTON POST

The Obamas — from left, Malia, the president, Sasha and Michelle — introduced their new Portuguese water dog, Bo, on April 14. Public interest in the first family, from their clothes to their pet, is intense.

in Kenilworth, as they did last week? Or settle on the SEED public boarding school in Southeast as an exemplar of education for urban kids?

One important hire was Jocelyn Frye, a Washington native and classmate of Michelle Obama's at Harvard Law School. Frye serves in a dual role: as a domestic policy adviser to the president and director of policy and projects for the first lady. She describes herself as part of the "connective tissue" between the East and West wings.

"The outreach starts with both of them; it is part of their style," Frye says. "When she and her family moved here they didn't just want to sit behind four walls. They wanted to get out."

Frye spent 15 years at the nonprofit National Partnership for Women and Families in Washington. She is among the few administration staffers with lobbying backgrounds who received exemptions from its non-lobbyist hiring policy.

Now her work includes finding places where a visit or activity by the first lady will tie into a broader theme or agenda. "It's easy to write down on a piece of paper that you want to inspire people; it's harder to make that real," she says. Frye put at least three local sites on Michelle Obama's radar: Miriam's Kitchen at 24th and G streets NW, Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care in Adams Morgan, and Anacostia High School —

all of which the first lady visited. (Frye also suggested two lunch spots Michelle Obama went to with local leaders: B. Smith's and Georgia Brown's.)

In her remarks, particularly to young people, Obama invariably stresses the importance of diligence and personal responsibility. She tells of being an ordinary girl growing up in a working-class family on Chicago's South Side — but look where she is now, thanks to hard work.

"I have, in some way, been where you are, because, you know, I didn't come into this position with a lot of wealth, with a lot of resources," she told a group of mostly Latino teens in an after-school program at Mary's Center in February. "There is no magic dust that was sprinkled on my head or on Barack's head. We were kids much like you who figured out one day that our fate was in our own hands.

"... I feel like it's an obligation for me to share some of that with you. If it's as simple as sitting around in a circle answering questions or being in a room shaking a hand or giving a hug or reading a story, I want you all to see me and to see Barack, and to have access to whatever we can offer."

After reading to children in a day-

care classroom that afternoon, Obama learned that some 80 other staffers had hoped to meet her, too, before she went to talk with the teenagers. But the Secret Service had a problem: Only 15 of the center's management types had been cleared. The solution: Cafeteria tables were lined up in the kitchen to serve as an impromptu barrier that Obama could reach across to proffer handshakes and photo opportunities to everyone, including janitors.

"She made it very personal," says Mary's Center CEO Maria Gomez, a public health nurse who founded the clinic in 1988.

The Obamas' focus on local service groups, as opposed to national ones, has had a multiplier effect. The publicity inspires volunteers and donations. In her 35 years working with teens in crisis, says Deborah Shore, executive director of Sasha Bruce Youthwork, a president had never visited. After Obama did, the number of volunteer calls rose five-fold. "It makes such a difference, really," she says.

The same is true at Mary's Center. And over at Miriam's Kitchen, an entire new crew of volunteers is expected to arrive soon: members of the first lady's own staff.

