

# **William J. Clinton**

## **Presidential History Project**

### **Briefing Materials**

**Todd Stern**

**January 31 – February 1, 2008**

**Prepared by Monica Gray, Research Assistant**  
January 2008

**MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED OR CIRCULATED**

## Todd Stern News Timeline

Prepared by Monica Gray

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 01/12/2007

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**1993-1995** Todd D. Stern serves as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Staff Secretary. (*Federal Staff Directory*, Alexandria, VA: CQ Staff Directories, Inc., 1998 / Winter, p.1297)

### 1993

*June* White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty appoints staff secretary John Podesta and deputy staff secretary Stern to conduct an internal review of the White House Travel Office, specifically focusing on the events that led to the May 1993 dismissal of seven White House Travel Office employees. (*The Washington Post*, 06/02/1993)

### 1995

*May* *The New York Times* reports that Stern, 44, is to be married to Jennifer Lynn Klein, a fellow White House employee who works in the office of First Lady Hillary Clinton. Ms. Klein, a graduate of Columbia Law School, serves as a senior policy analyst on the Domestic Policy Council. (*The New York Times*, 09/10/1995)

*June* On June 30, 1995, President Clinton appoints Stern to be Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary. Special Assistant to the President Philip Caplan of the White House Cabinet Affairs office replaces Stern as Deputy Staff Secretary. "Todd Stern has done an outstanding job managing my substantial information flow and providing important counsel. I am confident he will continue to serve with distinction as Staff Secretary. Both Todd and Phil Caplan are valued members of this administration, and I expect they will continue to make important contributions in their new roles," states the President. (John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, "Appointment of Todd Stern as White House Staff Secretary and Philip Caplan as White House Deputy Staff Secretary," June 1995, <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=51577>> (01/14/2008).

### 1996

*January* The White House releases documents that describe Mrs. Clinton's 1980s involvement as a private lawyer for an Arkansas savings and loan company tied to the Whitewater scandal. These documents evoke further concern, particularly among congressional Republicans, about the first lady's 1993 involvement in "Travelgate," the controversial dismissal of seven White House Travel Office employees following an FBI investigation. Congressional Republicans have long accused the Administration of covering up Mrs. Clinton's part in the Travel Office firings, and subpoenas for further investigation are issued. In one of the 1993 travel office memos released earlier in the week, David Watkins, former head of the office of White House Management and Administration, claims that

he immediately fired the Travel Office staff because “he knew that there would be hell to pay if we failed to take swift and decisive action in conformity with the First Lady’s wishes.” In the other memo written on May 27, 1993, Stern warns of negative repercussions for the White House if it attempted to misguide the media about the first lady’s involvement in the Travel Office case. “Problem is that if we do any kind of report and fail to address these questions, press jumps on you wanting to know answers that aren’t fully honest. You risk hugely compounding the problem by getting caught in half-truths. You run risk of turning this into a ‘cover-up.’” Stern closes his hand-written memo, “We need to think seriously about whether or not it won’t be better to come clean.” (*The Boston Globe*, 01/06/1996)

## 1997

*January* Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) places a hold on the confirmation of Clinton’s nominee for labor secretary, Alexis Herman, while congressional Republicans investigate her controversial role in “political coffees” and her role in presidential campaign strategies. Herman, director of the White House Public Liaison Office, is accused of having invited to a White House coffee “Democratic National Committee (DNC) fund-raisers, bankers, and their top federal regulator.” Despite having a “lead role” in planning the coffee, Herman does not attend the event upon learning that “DNC officials would be attending the coffee,” although she has in the past attended up to three other coffees where DNC members were present, reports *The Washington Times*. Stern says there was a “miscommunication within the White House” that left Herman under the impression that the coffee was “an official White House event, not a political event sponsored by the DNC.” Despite objections from Republicans, President Clinton continues to support Ms. Herman’s nomination. (*The Washington Times*, 01/31/1997)

*July* Stern is tapped to head of the Administration’s Global Climate Change initiative. *The Washington Post* reports that leading the global warming endeavor will likely be a “full time...effort” that will include “a White House conference in October and then the big Kyoto, Japan, summit in December.” (*The Washington Post*, 07/23/1997)

*October* The Clinton Administration holds a conference to garner support for its position to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change, but “the world is still waiting to learn what that position is,” reports *The Washington Post*. With the UN-sponsored climate summit scheduled to take place in Kyoto, Japan in December, some politicians and scientists, such as Howard Ris, executive director of the Union of Concerned Scientists, voice concern that “...the White House is so out-front on this issue – without really taking a position.” Clinton has repeatedly made known his desire to conclude binding agreements among industrialized nations to cut carbon and various other heat trapping pollutants as a segment of the international Kyoto climate treaty, which is to be negotiated in December; yet he also wants to craft a policy which grants fiscal flexibility to U.S. companies. White House officials have been engaged in “intense debates,” but, according to *The Washington Post*, they have not yet set a target, for instance, to establish “when reductions should be phased in, or how far they should go. Nor have they disclosed publicly the kinds of flexible approaches, possibly carbon taxes or other market incentives, they say should be included.” Stern describes recent discussions as productive and “intense,” but not hostile. He states, “We’re

going through a very common policy process in which a lot of ideas are discussed, scrutinized, and reshaped.” (*The Washington Post*, 10/06/1997; *Associated Press Online*, 10/10/1997)

President Clinton puts forth an environmental plan to reduce the carbon emissions of industrialized countries to 1990 levels between the years 2008 and 2012. Characterizing the proposal as a “sensible and sound” route for environmental change, Clinton explains that the climate initiative calls for a reliance upon energy-efficient technologies that are already in place. He adds that the proposal offers \$5 billion in U.S. tax incentives for businesses over the next five years. House Speaker Newt Gingrich declares that House Republicans will “oppose any plan that raises taxes on hard-working Americans, threatens our economic growth or exempts developing nations like Brazil, China, India and Mexico.” Gail McDonald, President of the Global Climate Coalition, is also critical of the plan, which she deems “unacceptable,” predicting it will “set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions that in the end will result in high gasoline taxes or rationing.” Stern says the plan will be discussed in Bonn, and in Kyoto, Japan in December when the greenhouse gas emissions cap is projected to be set. (*Courier Mail – Australia*, 10/24/1997)

*November* The Administration tasks approximately 80 veteran diplomats and senior White House aides with the responsibility for negotiating a “binding international treaty limiting emissions of greenhouse gases.” Stern, head of the White House’s climate change task force, is among the eleven senior White House aides who have been tapped to join the U.S. delegation as they attempt to reach an agreement at the summit in Kyoto, Japan. (*The Washington Post*, 11/26/1997)

*December* At the 150-nation Climate Change Treaty conference in Kyoto, the U.S. reportedly offers to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by two percent more than it had initially planned in order to attain its goal of reaching 1990 emission levels by 2012. European representatives claim this additional reduction is still too modest. Stern claims, however, that the report offering an additional two percent emission reduction is an “understatement” of what the Clinton Administration is truly offering, and environmental negotiations will continue. (*The Associated Press*, 12/08/1997)

## **1998**

*March* President Clinton appoints Stern to be Assistant to the President for Special Projects. Tasking Stern with coordinating the Administration’s climate change initiatives, Clinton praises Stern for doing “an outstanding job here both as Staff Secretary and on a variety of special projects.” As head of the White House’s climate change efforts since July 1997, Stern has focused on the Kyoto conference, public education and outreach activities. In his new position, Stern will collaborate with a broader spectrum of executive agencies, such as the Council on Environmental Quality, the National Economic Council and the National Security Council, in addition to the Council of Economic Advisors and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. President Clinton says: “I am confident he [Stern] will do an excellent job coordinating our efforts to implement sensible policies, advance our diplomatic agenda and expand our educational outreach to the American people on this very important issue.” (*U.S. Newswire*, 03/11/1998)

- May* Clinton asks the building industry to unite with state and local governments in an “American crusade” to design more energy efficient homes to help the country in its fight against global warming. Stern explains that the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) program uses federal money to study sustainable home technologies which are then recommended to private sector businesses. “You don’t have government saying, ‘Do this, do that.’ ... The private industry is going to do what they think is attractive to their consumers as well as energy efficient,” Stern tells reporters. (*The Associated Press*, 05/04/1998; *The Washington Post*, 05/05/1998)
- July* *The New York Times* reports that the White House has released a March 11, 1996 memorandum from Stern to President Clinton in which Stern requests an executive decision for export control policies, specifically with regard to “transfer of jurisdiction over communications satellites exports to the Commerce from the State Department.” Referring to an attached memorandum authored by national security adviser Anthony Lake and the head of the National Economic Council Laura D’Andrea Tyson, the memorandum reveals Clinton’s check mark, signifying his approval of the jurisdiction transfer. (*The New York Times*, 07/18/1998)
- August* The White House Council of Economic Advisers releases a report which claims that through a system of “buying and selling pollution permits internationally,” the U.S. could reduce its costs by “half and possibly by as much as 85 percent” while helping “control the heat-trapping gases that cause global warming.” Designed to help the U.S. reach targets set in the 1997 Kyoto climate change protocol, the economists’ model suggests that about one-fourth of curbed greenhouse gas emissions could occur within the U.S.. The remaining curbed emissions, the report contends, could be purchased from other countries who have reduced their emissions by more than the treaty mandates, and consequently have surplus pollution permits to trade. However, Stern and Janet Yellin, the President’s chief economic adviser, contend that this economic model “underestimates” the extent to which the Administration’s climate change policies will cut domestic carbon dioxide emissions. Yellin maintains that the report does not take into consideration a number of initiatives the Administration advocates which reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, specifically noting that the report overlooks White House efforts to “restructure the electric utility industry, to provide tax incentives for energy-saving investments, and to subsidize research into new technologies like solar power and fuel-efficient automobiles.” (*The New York Times*, 08/01/1998)
- November* Argentinean President Carlos Menem offers to make his the first developing country to volunteer to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, “seeking a breakthrough...in talks to reduce global warming.” Stern says that Argentina’s commitment opens “a new pathway for developing countries” to join the 38 industrialized nations who have committed to similar emission targets outlined in the Kyoto Protocol. The U.S. has not yet signed the Protocol. U.S. opponents claim that the treaty must garner more support from developing countries, who have been “merely asked to do what they can to curtail emissions.” (*The Associated Press*, 11/11/1998)
- 1999-2000** Stern serves as Assistant to the President and Director of Special Projects. (Raymond A. Mosley and John W. Carlin, *The United States Government Manual*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1999, p. 91)

## 1999

*May*      *The Washington Post* reports that Stern will leave the White House in June to serve as a counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury. Currently, the Treasury Secretary is Robert E. Rubin, but the position is “likely soon to be” held by Lawrence Summers. (*The Washington Post*, 05/21/1999)

*September*      Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers holds a press conference with Attorney General Janet Reno in which he announces the “submission to Congress of the first national money-laundering strategy.” Stern and other members of the Treasury's Office of Enforcement and Office of the General Counsel are recognized for their “very hard work on this strategy.” (*FDCH Political Transcripts*, 09/23/1999)

## 2001

*July*      Stern joins the Wilmer Cutler Pickering law firm as a partner. He will “specialize in congressional investigations and crisis management and will advise clients on legislative and policy matters.” (*The Washington Post*, 07/26/2001)

## TIMELINES

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- Timeline of the Clinton Presidency, prepared by Robbie Robinson, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 05/30/2002.
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- Todd Stern and William Antholis, “A Changing Climate: The Road Ahead for the United States,” *Center for American Progress*, 11/26/2007.



**WHITE HOUSE DEPUTY STAFF SECRETARY AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT  
(1993-1995)  
AND  
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT AND STAFF SECRETARY  
(1995-1999)**

***Staff Secretary***

- Bradley H. Patterson, Jr., “The Staff Secretary,” in *The White House Staff: Inside the West Wing and Beyond*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000) pp. 339-341.

***Travelgate***

- “Transcript of Briefing on White House Travel Office by Chief of Staff McLarty (excerpted),” The White House, Washington, D.C., *U.S. Newswire*, 07/03/1993.
- Bob Hohler, “Records on First Lady are Yielded,” *The Boston Globe*, 01/06/1996.
- Jeanne Meserve, William Clinger, and Bill Richardson, “New Findings on Travelgate,” *The Late Edition*, CNN, 01/07/1996.
- Angie Cannon, “Travel Memos Point to Hillary Clinton,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 01/18/1996.

***Herman Nomination***

- E. Michael Myers, “Herman Helped get Regulator to Bankers; Says She Didn't Know Coffee was Political,” *The Washington Times*, 01/31/1997.

**SENIOR AID ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE (1997-1999)**  
**&**  
**ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS (1999-2000)**  
**&**  
**COUNSELOR TO THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY (1999-2001)**

***Senior White House Negotiator: Kyoto Protocol***

- John H. Cushman, Jr., “Clinton Hones Sales Pitch On Global Warming Pact,” *The New York Times*, 10/04/1997.
- Joby Warrick, “White House Fosters Awareness of Global Warming but Hedges on Policy,” *The Washington Post*, 10/06/1997.
- H. Josef Hebert, “Clinton Eyes Global Warming Plan,” *Associated Press Online*, 10/10/1997.
- Eric Schmitt, “GLOBAL WARMING; Congress, the Kibbitzer at the Climate Table, Waits for Its Turn,” *The New York Times*, 12/01/1997.
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- Kevin Gray, “Argentina Advances Global Warming Talks with Surprise Announcement,” *The Associated Press*, 11/11/1998.

***White House Senior Aid on Global Climate Change***

- John H. Cushman, “Big Problem, Big Problems: Getting to Work on Global Warming,” *The New York Times*, 12/08/1998.
- Charles Babington, “Environmentalists Criticize Gore; Groups Cite Broken Promises on ‘Global Warming Pollution,’” *The Washington Post*, 04/14/1999.
- Sonya Ross, “President Orders Federal Agencies to Conserve Energy,” *The Associated Press*, 06/03/1999.

***PATH Program***

- John F. Harris, “Builders Enlisted To Fight Warming; Clinton Seeks to Cut Homes’ Energy Use,” *The Washington Post*, 05/05/1998.

***Supervisor of the Treasury’s Anti-Money Laundering Strategy***

- “U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno Holds News Conference with Treasury Secretary Summers on the Russian Money Laundering Problem,” *The White House, Washington, D.C., FDCH Political Transcripts*, 09/23/1999.

## **Todd Stern Suggested Topics**

*Prepared by Monica Gray*

*Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 01/08/2007*

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### ***Origins of Relationship with Clinton***

- When did you initially meet Bill Clinton? Describe your first impressions of him.
- How did you come to join the Clinton Administration?

### ***Deputy Staff Secretary and Deputy Assistant to the President***

- Discuss your service as Deputy Staff Secretary and Special Assistant to the President. What activities occupied most of your time?
- Discuss how you came to be involved with the 'Travelgate' controversy, and outline what your own internal investigations entailed. Did the press treatment of this episode get the basic story right or wrong? Did the media scrutiny of this episode have a lasting impact on the White House and/or its relations with the press?

### ***Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary***

- How did you come to be nominated as Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary? What was your understanding of the role and responsibilities you would assume in this position? Did you make any significant changes in process or personnel when you took over from John Podesta?
- What were the keys to being a good Staff Secretary for Bill Clinton? Were there any members of the Cabinet or the White House staff that were especially problematic for you in doing your job as Staff Secretary? How much difficulty did you have in policing the flow of paper into and out of the Oval Office?
- Comment on any changes you might have noticed in the functioning of the White House when chief of staff Mack McLarty was replaced by Leon Panetta.

### ***White House Senior Aid on Global Climate Change***

- How did you come to be appointed head of the Administration's Global Climate Change initiative? How did your duties shift, specifically as you were tasked with collaborating with various executive agencies such as the National Economic Council and the National Security Council?
- What was the Administration's broad strategy on environmental policy? Discuss the decision-making process with respect to environmental politics.
- With whom in the White House staff did you work most closely and on what issues? How closely did you work with the Vice President in developing environmental policy? Discuss your relationship with the Vice President.
- Comment on Clinton's relationship with Vice President Gore. Did the President usually seek and follow Gore's recommendations on environmental issues? Do you recall any substantive disagreements between them in this area? If so, how were they resolved?
- Describe your interactions with Congress as you worked on climate change legislation. With which members and committees did you work most closely?
- Explain your involvement with the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH). Comment on how the Partnership fared in terms of merging the private and public sectors to produce energy-efficient homes.

### ***Director of Special Projects & Senior White House Negotiator of the Kyoto Negotiations***

- Discuss Clinton's role in developing environmental policy, specifically with regard to the Kyoto Treaty.

- In your opinion, what were the greatest challenges associated with planning and participating in the Kyoto Climate Change Treaty conference? Comment on the Administration's strategies and goals, specifically in terms of gaining the support of developed versus developing nations.
- How did you attempt to craft the Kyoto Treaty to accommodate U.S. businesses?
- Gauge the success of the Administration's plan to reduce carbon emissions of industrialized countries to 1990 standards by 2012.
- Describe your role as Senior White House Negotiator in the Buenos Aires Climate Negotiations. How did these negotiations compare to the Kyoto Climate negotiations?
- Discuss the significance of Argentina's commitment to the greenhouse gas emission standards of the Kyoto Protocol. Did other developing nations follow their example?

### ***Counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury***

- Describe your role and responsibilities as a counselor to the Secretary of the Treasury. What issues occupied the majority of your time?

### ***The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect***

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments during your time with the Clinton Administration? What were your greatest disappointments?
- What do you consider Clinton's greatest assets as President? Gauge his strengths and weaknesses as a policymaker, a legislative leader, and a party leader.
- How did foreign and domestic heads of state view Clinton, specifically with respect to environmental issues? Were there any common misconceptions?
- What will be the Clinton Administration's legacy on environmental policy?
- What features of the Clinton presidency were misunderstood by the media? How should Clinton be viewed by future historians?