

EDWIN L. HARPER TIMELINE

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- 1968-1969** Harper serves in the Nixon Administration in the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, precursor to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), as Assistant to the Director on the Resources Planning Staff.
- 1969-1972** Serves as Special Assistant to the President and Assistant Director of the Domestic Council in the Nixon administration.
- 1976** Represents Governor Reagan and President Ford in negotiations with the Republican Platform Committee at the 1976 Republican Convention.
- 1980** Serves in the Reagan campaign as a member of the Spending Control Task Force chaired by Caspar Weinberger.
- November* Serves in the transition as member of the Policy Development Office.

Office of Management and Budget

- December* On the 11th, President-elect Reagan selects Congressman David Stockman (R-MI) to head OMB. (*The Washington Post* 12/12/1980)
- Director-designate Stockman and Rep. Jack Kemp (R-NY) offer a detailed economic plan for the first 100 days of the Reagan administration entitled “Avoiding a GOP Economic Dunkirk.” The plan calls for quick policy moves to avoid a “double-dip recession in early 1981” including: ending oil price controls, reducing Federal spending, tax relief, and blocking the imposition of new regulations on business. (*The New York Times*, 12/14/1980)
- The Carter administration rejects a request made by Stockman for immediate access to budget analysts and for a look at the 1982 budget being drafted by the administration. (*The New York Times*, 12/19/1980)
- 1981**
- January* Economic planners in the Reagan administration set February 3 as the tentative date when the President will give Congress proposals for far-reaching reductions in Federal taxes, spending and regulation of business. (*The New York Times*, 01/04/1981)
- On the 9th, Harper is nominated as Deputy Director of OMB. It is announced that Harper will also hold the title of Assistant to the President, the first time the rank is given to a Deputy Director of OMB. (*The New York Times*, 01/09/1981)

Reagan, in his inaugural address, highlights the country's economic troubles arguing that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." (*President Reagan's First Inaugural Address, 01/20/1981*)

In a surprise move on the 21st, President Reagan fires all Federal inspectors general. (*The New York Times 01/23/1981*)

President Reagan makes the Federal hiring freeze, announced on his first day in office, retroactive to November 5th. Exemptions to the policy, to be administered by OMB, are limited to jobs that "protect life and property, and for medical, hospital and other health care operations." (*The New York Times, 01/24/1981*)

On the 26th, OMB director-designate David Stockman states that the administration was compiling an array of proposals to Congress for permanent cuts in such benefits as Medicaid and dairy price supports. (*The New York Times, 01/27/1981*)

On the 28th, the administration releases a budget proposal to reduce by one-fourth the Federal food stamp assistance program. Reductions of about \$3.8 billion over the next two years are recommended in the proposal. (*The Washington Post, 01/28/1981*)

OMB proposes large cutback in foreign aid. The proposal slashes \$2.6 billion from the foreign aid budget submitted by former President Carter. The plan calls for cuts in direct bilateral assistance, contributions to multilateral development banks, international organizations such as U.N. agencies, the Food for Peace program and the Peace Corps. Media reports see this as a test of strength between Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. and more conservative budget officials. The eventual White House budget recommendation reduces the levels of cuts proposed by OMB. (*The Washington Post, 01/29/1981; 02/01/1981*)

In the first legal court challenge to President Reagan's policies, the National Treasury Employees Union, files suit on the 28th to block the administration's move to make its Federal hiring freeze retroactive. The class action suit asks a Federal District Court to declare the act unconstitutional. The case is dismissed with prejudice in September 1981. (*The New York Times, 01/29/1981*)

February

The White House informs Congress it is targeting reductions of \$40 billion to \$50 billion in the Federal budget for the fiscal year 1982. The preliminary document, prepared by OMB, includes cuts in most major Federal programs except the military. Controversial cuts include 50% reductions in the budgets of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and a \$17 billion reduction in various social service programs. (*The Washington Post, 02/05/1981; The New York Times, 01/05/1981, 02/07/1981*)

Administration officials announce that upcoming budget cuts will spare programs that assist the “truly needy.” Seven safe programs are to be fully funded. The programs include social security, summer youth employment programs, veterans benefits, free school lunch and breakfast programs, and Operation Head Start. (*The Washington Post*, 02/11/1981)

OMB announces its decision to eliminate antitrust enforcement by the Federal Trade Commission by cutting off funding for the agency’s Bureau of Competition. Media sources say the move indicates the administration’s intention to shape regulatory policy through OMB’s central control over Federal spending. (*The Washington Post* 02/13/1981)

President Reagan announces a plan to form six Cabinet Councils to take over much of the debate on administration policies. The economic affairs group is be chaired by the Treasury secretary and include the secretaries of Commerce and State, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and the director of the Office of Management and Budget. (*The Washington Post* 02/16/1983)

Harper, responding to congressional questions at his confirmation hearing, rejects the argument that the firing of all inspectors general was political in nature. He notes that some of the remaining inspector generals may still be rehired. (*Hearing before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, Nomination of Edwin L. Harper as Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget*, 02/17/1981)

On the 18th, President Reagan submits his budget to Congress in a document entitled “America’s New Beginning: A Program for Economic Recovery.” The book includes a brief, formal message to Congress from the President, a report on the state of the nation’s economy, and descriptions of the administration’s tax and spending proposals. Proposals included changes in 83 programs, spanning the full range of government activities, that if made would reduce spending to \$695.5 billion, or \$41.4 billion below the “current base.” (*The New York Times*, 02/19/1981)

President Reagan signs an executive order relaxing government regulations on business. The order requires Federal agencies to list regulation alternatives, provide cost and benefit analysis, as well as allow for public comment. The agencies, under the supervision of OMB, are required to pick the least costly option for achieving the regulatory objective. (*The New York Times*, 02/18/1981)

President Reagan disavows a statement by Stockman that the administration is considering increasing the gasoline tax by two cents a gallon. A White House official says that Mr. Reagan was “surprised to learn” of the proposal. (*The New York Times*, 02/24/1981)

The administration defends “block grant” proposals included in President Reagan’s new budget. In a press conference at OMB, Secretary of Education T.H. Bell and Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker defend the new block grant program. (*The Washington Post* 02/25/1981)

On the 27th, President Reagan threatens to veto his tax bill if it is rewritten by House Democrats. The administration expresses the need for a “clean bill” that is neither “tilted to favor the poor over the rich or loaded with special tax benefits.” (*The Washington Post*, 02/28/1981)

On the 27th, a national coalition of trade unions, civil rights groups, religious organizations and social welfare agencies is announced. The coalition opposes President Reagan’s proposed budget. It argues that proposed cuts “could wreak great damage to the fabric of this nation.” It is noted that many of the 157 coalition members, especially the substantial number of trade unions, retain close ties to the Democratic Party (*The New York Times*, 02/28/1981)

March

The Reagan administration approves a second round of budget cuts, totaling about \$10 billion. Cuts hit politically sensitive areas, including veterans benefits, child nutrition, job training for the poor and minorities, and water projects. The cuts were made necessary by the discovery last week that the administration had underestimated Federal spending by \$3.1 billion. (*The Washington Post*, 03/01/1981)

According to a report released by OMB, the government is owed more than \$25 billion in delinquent loans, unpaid taxes and other overdue debts. (*The New York Times*, 03/06/1981)

The administration announces the end of its Federal hiring freeze. It is replaced by a new Federal employment ceiling that will reduce the government’s non-defense payroll by 33,000 personnel in fiscal 1981 and 63,100 in fiscal 1982. According to OMB, most of the reductions will occur through attrition. (*The Washington Post*, 03/07/1981)

On the 11th, the administration acknowledges that one of every six families on welfare would be forced off the rolls or have its benefits reduced under proposed budget cuts and rules changes. The administration argues that the cuts will not hurt the truly needy. (*The Washington Post*, 03/12/1981)

On the 26th, President Reagan signs Executive Order 12301 establishing the Presidential Council on Integrity and Efficiency. Harper is named as chairman of the Council which is to lead the administration’s efforts against fraud and waste. Harper retains his post as Deputy Director of OMB. (*The Washington Post*, 03/27/1981)

The administration reappoints five of the sixteen fired inspectors general to similar positions. Harper states that some of the other dismissed inspectors general remain under consideration for reappointment. Twelve are eventually rehired. (*The New York Times* 03/27/1981)

April

House Democratic leaders propose an alternative to President Reagan's economic program. Their plan embraces three-fourths of Reagan's proposed spending cuts but restores more than \$7 billion to social programs, the arts and to veterans' benefits. Education, nutrition, job training and social services would also be given larger budgets under the Democratic proposal. The plan also calls for a reduction in the Reagan tax cut. Stockman labeled the plan "unacceptable." (*The Washington Post*, 04/07/1981)

On the 6th, Stockman defends President Reagan's budget in front of the House Select Committee on Aging. He defends the administration against Congressional charges that the budget constituted "a blueprint for disaster" for 'millions of low-income elderly people. (*The New York Times*, 04/07/1981)

Harper holds a White House briefing announcing a moratorium on the production of new government audiovisual materials and publications. Harper states that cuts could save taxpayers \$100 million annually. (*The Washington Post*, 04/21/1981)

On the 28th, in a televised address to a joint session of Congress, Reagan asks for support for his economic recovery program. (*President Reagan's Speech to Congress*, 04/28/1981)

May

Harper announces administration opposition to a legislative proposal that would substantially increase air traffic controllers' pay while reducing their work week. Harper states that the legislation being considered is "out of line with both public and private sector standards." (*Wall Street Journal*, 05/01/1981)

On the 2nd, Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd, (D-WV), states that he would vote for the Reagan budget. His remarks indicate that there would be little serious opposition from Democratic leaders once the bill reaches the Senate. The Democratic-controlled House, however, continues to debate the issue with the White House predicting the House vote to be "very, very close". (*The New York Times*, 05/03/1981)

On the 7th, the Democratic-controlled House votes 253 to 176 for Reagan's \$688.8 billion budget. Sixty-three Democrats join a unanimous Republican caucus. (*The Washington Post*, 05/08/1981)

On the 12th, by a vote of 78 to 20, the Senate passes the administration's budget with only slight modifications. Modifications to the House version restore \$7.9 billion cut from Social Security and other Federal retirement programs, and \$1.7 billion to allow military and civil service retirees to receive cost-of-living increases in their pensions. (*The Washington Post*, 05/13/1981)

June

Harper announces new spending cuts totaling \$361 million. The additional cuts become necessary to keep overall Federal spending within the administration's target of keeping the 1981 budget deficit under \$54.5 billion. This target had been announced by the administration in February. (*The Washington Post*, 06/10/1981)

OMB notifies Congress of its intention to cut off funds for the Federal Trade Commission's antitrust case against the nation's three leading makers of ready-to-eat cereals: Kellogg Co., General Mills Inc., and General Foods Corp. The move would prohibit the FTC from issuing an initial decision in the nine-year-old suit until Congress reviews the antitrust issues raised by the matter. (*The Washington Post* 06/13/1981)

On the 19th, the administration recommends an additional \$20 billion in spending cuts over the next three years. House Democrats respond by threatening to force piecemeal votes, whereby members would have to vote separately on each category of cuts. The GOP plan, developed jointly by House Republicans and Budget Director David A. Stockman, includes a modified version of a previous proposal for consolidating nearly 100 separate Federal programs into no-strings block grants to the states, which was previously rejected by the House. (*The Washington Post*, 06/20/1981)

On the 25th, the House rejects an attempt by Democrats to force a piecemeal vote on the Reagan budget cuts. The vote is 217 to 210 as conservative Democrats once again joined Republicans in voting against the initiative. Democratic leaders had hoped to force members to vote separately on each major category of cuts without the protective cover of voting for Reagan's program as a whole. The outcome, according to media sources, surprises Republicans as well as Democrats and demonstrated that effective control of the House lies in the hands of the Republicans and their conservative Democratic allies. (*The Washington Post*, 06/26/1981)

July

Harper meets with President Reagan and offers a six month report of activities in the inspector general program. He reports that the inspectors general had questioned more than \$1 billion in Federal spending, recovered \$95 million and had saved an additional \$300 million through pre-spending intervention over the first 6 months of 1981. Harper also notes investigations resulting in more than 600 indictments and 400 convictions. Reagan tells Harper, "you sure have my backing, go get 'em." (*The Washington Post*, 07/10/1981)

August President Reagan announces the formation of the Budget Review Board, which must approve any executive branch decision to spend money not considered specifically during budget preparation. Key members include Counselor to the President Edwin Meese, White House Chief of Staff James Baker, and David A. Stockman. (*The Washington Post* 08/06/1981)

On the 13th, President Reagan signs the tax and budget-cutting bills at the core of his economic program. At the signing he concedes that budget deficits in the near future may be larger than predicted but that the bills represent a historic turnaround for the United States. (*The Washington Post* 08/14/1981)

In an interview, Harper states that one of the most promising areas for improving government efficiency is debt collection. He notes that citizens owe the U.S. government \$175 billion through such agencies as the Internal Revenue Service, the Agriculture Department and the Veterans Administration. (*The New York Times*, 08/23/1981)

September The administration announces that debt collectors will go to the Southeast in an effort to collect millions of dollars in improper and delinquent Federal farm loans. Harper tells the Senate Small Business Committee that Small Business Administration (SBA) attorneys will be given special prosecuting authority to start prosecutions for improper application and use of government loans. (*The New York Times*, 09/12/1981)

November Harper announces that the SBA has 6000 delinquent disaster loans on its books but that no one has been taken to court. Harper states, “that policy’s gonna change.” (*The New York Times*, 11/30/1981)

On the 10th, the White House receives word of damaging remarks made by Stockman about the President’s economic policies. The interview by William Greider is later published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Among other damaging quotes, Stockman calls Reagan’s supply-side economic policies a “Trojan Horse.” (Richard Darman, *Who’s in Control: Polar Politics and the Sensible Center* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 104)

December The media reports that several senior White House advisers and administration budget officials plan to ask President Reagan to approve a total of \$45 billion in new taxes that would take effect over the next two fiscal years. According to reports, the proposal is based on new economic forecasts supported by the Treasury Department, the Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers and the White House Office of Policy Development. (*The New York Times*, 12/21/1981)

1982

January President Reagan announces the organization of a policy team to assist in his decision to dismantle the Department of Energy. The committee is to be chaired by Meese. Harper is one of nine senior staff members on the committee. (*White House Press Release*, 01/12/1982)

Office of Policy Development/Assistant to the President

February On the 5th, President Reagan announces Harper's appointment as Assistant to the President for Policy Development. He is also named to head the Office of Policy Development (OPD). Harper replaces Martin Anderson as Assistant to the President for Policy Development and Edwin Gray as Director of the Office of Policy Development. Harper is replaced at OMB by Joseph R. Wright, Jr. (*White House Press Releases*, 02/05/1981; 02/22/1982)

Harper announces administration opposition to pending legislation that would force the Federal government to pay interest on bills it does not pay on time. Harper labels the House bill "costly" and notes that more than 80 percent of the total value of the Federal government's bills is paid early or on time, and that OMB is making progress on the issue. (*The Washington Post*, 02/15/1982)

March The administration announces the reorganization of OPD and the formation of a new Office of Policy Information with OPD to be headed by Edwin Gray. (*The New York Times* 03/02/1982)

President Reagan announces the appointment of J. Peter Grace as Chairman of a new private-sector study group to improve government efficiency. Mr. Grace states that the "Grace Commission," will work to submit its first report to the president within six months. (*The New York Times*, 03/04/1982)

May At a conference of the National Academy of Science, Harper rejects the notion that the Federal government should play a role in improving math and science competency in public schools. He states that the private sector must do more and that the Federal government should not be looked to for solutions to the public education crisis. (*The Washington Post*, 05/14/1982)

July Harper announces that the Federal government will sell 60,000 acres of public lands to "reduce the national debt." The preliminary list includes Federal properties in all fifty states. (*The New York Times*, 07/02/1982)

Media reports that the administration is conducting a wide-ranging review of economic policies. Harper describes the policy review as a process of refining, not reshaping, basic Reagan policies.

August President Reagan announces the formation of a White House Coordinating Council on Women. The President designates Elizabeth Dole as Chair of the Coordinating Council. Harper is named as a standing member of the Council. The Council will also work on the appointment of women and bringing women's concerns into the policy making process. (*White House Press Release*, 08/27/1982)

December The administration forms a Task Group on Regulation of Financial Services to be chaired by Vice President Bush. The high level group includes Harper and the heads of the seven major financial and market regulatory agencies. The goal of the group is to reorganize the dispersed financial regulatory system. (*National Journal*, 07/02/1983)

1983

- February* Harper attends a press conference where General Motors Corp. and Toyota Motor Corp. sign a “memorandum of understanding” to produce small, front-wheel drive cars in the United States. Harper states that the administration considered the joint venture preferable to mandatory trade restrictions or laws requiring foreign automakers to use a specific percentage of U.S. parts in cars sold in the United States. (*The Washington Post*, 02/18/1983)
- April* Responding to high unemployment figures, President Reagan states that job losses were not due to his policies but were the result of “structural unemployment . . . caused by changes in science, technology.” The media reports that the administration’s new interest in high tech can be traced to Edwin L. Harper. George A. Keyworth II, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy states, “as you hear the president talking more and more about high technology, that is Ed Harper talking.” (*The Washington Post*, 04/18/1983)
- July* Harper resigns as Assistant to the President for Policy Development and is replaced by John A. Svahn. (*Harper Resignation Letter to President Reagan*, 07/12/1983)
- August* President Reagan names Harper a member of the President’s Commission on Industrial Competitiveness (*White House Press Release*, 08/04/1983)

EDWIN L. HARPER SUGGESTED TOPICS

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Origins of Relationship with Reagan

- Discuss the origins of your relationship with Ronald Reagan.

1980 Campaign and Transition

- How did you come to join the campaign? Discuss your role as a member of the Spending Control Task Force during the campaign. Describe the purpose and function of this committee? Describe your relationship with Edwin Meese, Martin Anderson, and Caspar Weinberger. Did you have any other involvement with the campaign?
- How did you come to join the transition? Discuss your role in the transition. What were the responsibilities of the transition's Associate Director of Policy Development (Economic Affairs)? Evaluate the transition.
- What was your involvement with or reaction to Stockman and Kemp's "Avoiding a GOP Economic Dunkirk" plan? Did this document later shape economic policy in OMB and throughout the administration?

Office of Management and Budget

- Discuss your decision to join the administration? How did you come to hold the additional title of Assistant to the President and did the title carry additional responsibilities? Discuss your role and responsibilities in OMB? How was responsibility divided between you and Stockman?
- Describe the budget process in the Reagan administration. It has been said that OMB shifted from "analyst to negotiator" during the Reagan administration. If so, why was OMB brought to the forefront of economic policy-making? Describe OMB's relationship with Treasury and other key economic agencies. Describe the process of choosing the various budget cuts offered by the administration.
- Describe your relationship with David Stockman. How effective was Stockman as Director of OMB? Describe Stockman's relationship with others in the administration. What was the reaction in OMB and the administration to *Atlantic Monthly* article? How did the article affect operations at OMB and Stockman's standing in the administration?
- Describe your relationship with others in the administration: Baker, Meese, Haig, Allen, Clark, Weinberger, Deaver, etc.
- Discuss the role and responsibilities of the Presidential Council on Integrity and Efficiency. How did you come to lead the Council? How did the Council interact with OMB and White House? What relationship, if any did you have with the Grace Commission?
- What is the legacy of the Stockman/Harper OMB?
- Other potential topics might include: The administration's initial hiring freeze, its decision to backdate the freeze, and the court case that followed; the decision making process behind the controversial firing of all sitting inspectors general. Management of the inspectors general program; controversies surrounding the various proposed cuts, breaking the "Iron Triangle"; use of block grants - origin of the idea, controversies with its use at the Department of Education and elsewhere, gaining state support for reduced funding in exchange for greater spending latitude.

Office of Policy Development

- Describe the domestic policy making process. Compare your view of the role and administration of OPD to that of Martin Anderson. How did OPD interact with other officials and agencies in Reagan administration? What were the most important policy issues? Compare domestic policy making process under Reagan to that of Nixon.
- Discuss the formation of the Property Review Board and the decision to sell public lands.
- Discuss President Reagan's decision to conduct a top to bottom review of economic policy. What was the purpose of the review? What was your role in the process?
- Discuss your departure from the administration.

Reagan Presidency in Retrospect

- How would you characterize Reagan's management style? What type of advice and information did he seek from staff? Describe your relationship with others in the administration
- Discuss your personal observations of President Reagan.
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Reagan administration? What features of the presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Reagan presidency be viewed in history?

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