



William J. Clinton Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials

Roy Neel

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Research Assistants**

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ROY M. NEEL TIMELINE

Prepared By Rebecca T. Kinsey

The Miller Center, 03/05/2002

- 1976** Albert Gore, Jr., 28, is elected to Congress as Tennessee's Fourth District Representative. Roy Neel, a former sportswriter for the *Nashville Banner*, joins the campaign team and follows Gore to Washington, D.C.
- 1984** Gore is elected to the U.S. Senate. During Gore's senatorial career, Neel serves as legislative director and, later, chief of staff.
- 1992**
- July* On the 16th, the Democratic Party nominates William Jefferson Clinton for President and Gore for Vice-President. During the campaign, Neel serves as Gore's senior aide based in Little Rock, Arkansas. (*The Washington Post*, 07/31/1992)
- October* The vice-presidential debate takes place between Vice President Dan Quayle, Perot's Vice Presidential Candidate Admiral James Stockdale, and Gore. Neel characterizes the debate's outcome as a "knock-out punch" by Gore. (*The Washington Post*, 10/14/1992; *Larry King Live*, 10/13/1992)
- November* Clinton is elected the 42nd president of the United States of America. (Peter B. Levy, *Encyclopedia of the Clinton Presidency*, Greenwood: Westport, Connecticut, 2001, p. 379)
- Shortly after the election, Gore and Neel meet with Clinton and Thomas "Mack" McLarty in Little Rock to discuss Gore's role as Vice President. In a written agreement, Gore is given a weekly lunch meeting with the President, autonomy in selecting his staff, a West Wing office, a Chief of Staff who also serves as assistant to the President, access to any Clinton meeting, and Presidential authority in Cabinet meetings. Gore will oversee environmental issues, as well as new information technologies. Neel receives the title of "assistant to the president." (Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, Simon & Schuster: New York, 1994, pp. 227-28)
- December* Warren Christopher, in charge of overseeing cabinet selection in Little Rock during the transition, convenes daily meetings with the

President, the Vice President, the First Lady, Bruce Lindsey, and Neel. These discussions continue until Clinton's self-imposed December 25 deadline for cabinet nominations. (James MacGregor Burns and Georgia J. Sorenson, *Dead Center: Clinton-Gore Leadership and the Perils of Moderation*, Scribner: New York, 1999, pp. 79-80)

1993

January

Neel is officially named Vice President Gore's chief of staff on the 15th. (*The New York Times*, 01/15/1993)

Clinton is inaugurated on the 20th. Later that day, he signs an executive order barring former White House and Executive Branch officials from lobbying the White House for a period of five years following their service. New rules do not prohibit former officials from the supervision of other lobbyists or from congressional lobbying. (Drew, p. 41)

February

Following campaign vows to reduce the size of the White House staff by 25%, Clinton proposes a reduction of 350 White House workers, effective October 1. The deepest single cut is in the office of National Drug Control Policy. On the 10th, Clinton issues an executive order to his cabinet and agencies to reduce administrative costs by 3%. (*The Washington Post*, 02/10/1993)

April

Senate Republicans begin a filibuster of President Clinton's economic stimulus plan. On the 6th, Neel appears on *Larry King Live* and reiterates that the President "is not giving in on this package." The Republican filibuster endures and finally triumphs over Clinton's program on April 22. (*The Washington Post*, 04/02/1993 and 4/22/1993; *Larry King Live*, 04/06/1993)

Lani Guinier, a University of Pennsylvania professor and former NAACP attorney, is nominated to serve as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights on the 29th. (Drew, p. 200)

May

Neel is appointed to serve as a second deputy White House chief of staff, in part of a larger Clinton strategy to increase White House coordination and refocus momentum after the first 100 days in office. Neel will concentrate on the day-to-day running of operations, while the other deputy chief of staff, Mark Gearan, will focus on long-range planning. Chief of staff Mack McLarty will be freed to emphasize more major objectives. Neel is chosen, in

part, for his Washington savvy and congressional experience. (*The Washington Post*, 05/05/1993, 05/07/1993)

On the 19th, the entire seven-person staff of the White House travel office is fired due to financial mismanagement and is replaced with Clinton supporters. Questions are soon raised regarding allegations of improper actions on the part of the White House and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. An investigation leads to the reinstatement of five of these employees on July 2. Speaking for the White House, Neel later describes the situation of these five employees as “unfortunate.” (Levy, pp. 348-49; *The Washington Post*, 07/03/1993, 10/07/1993)

As Guinier’s nomination begins to draw negative attention, the President and the First Lady ask Neel to look into the matter. (Drew, p. 204)

Clinton’s budget plan is approved in the House by a 219-213 margin on the 27th. The plan calls for reductions of about \$102 billion in discretionary spending, with new revenue generated from higher taxes on the wealthy, increased taxation of Social Security benefits, a 1% increase in taxes on large corporations, and an energy tax. The bill passes without any Republican support and with heavy White House lobbying. (*The Washington Post*, 05/28/1993)

In a major White House staff reorganization, Republican David Gergen is named counselor to the President. Deputy chief of staff for long-term planning Gearan shifts to communications director. George Stephanopoulos, the previous communications director, moves to senior adviser for legislative and political strategy. This leaves Neel as sole deputy chief of staff, responsible for daily administration, and frees McLarty to set overall direction. (*The Washington Post*, 05/30/1993, 06/02/1993 and 11/24/1993)

June

On the 2nd, Guinier appears on ABC’s “Nightline” in an effort to defend her embattled nomination as widespread attention to her writings on civil rights yields sharp criticism from the Senate and the press. Guinier’s published works criticize gerrymandering in the form of black majority legislative districts as ineffective and propose “proportionate interest representation” as a replacement for super-majoritarian democracy. The next day, Clinton withdraws her nomination. (*The Washington Post*, 06/03/1993, 06/04/1993)

On the 25th, the Senate passes a revised version of Clinton's budget reconciliation bill by a vote of 50-49 with Vice President Gore casting the tie-breaking vote. The bill goes to conference in July. (*Congressional Quarterly Almanac: 103rd Congress, 1st Session 191993*, Vol. XLIX, Congressional Quarterly: Washington, D.C., 1994, p. 108)

July

Vince Foster, White House aide and long-time Clinton friend from Arkansas, commits suicide on the 2nd. Clinton later urges staffers to take more time off and spend more time with their families. (*The Washington Post*, 12/09/1993)

August

On the 10th, President Clinton signs the budget reconciliation bill into law, following close votes in the House (218-216) and the Senate (51-50) on August 5 and 6, respectively. (*Congressional Quarterly 1993*, p. 108)

In an effort to make good on a campaign pledge to reduce executive branch bureaucracy, Neel oversees White House staff cuts. "Some offices are under a lot of pressure, and this is very difficult," Neel said. "We are moving to reduce these offices as quickly as we can. But our responsibility is to get the work done and then to meet the staff level cut." (*The Washington Post*, 08/26/1993)

September

Gore releases the findings of the National Performance Review Panel, better known as the Reinventing Government Initiative, which began work early in 191993 while Neel was still Gore's chief of staff. The panel's report suggests specific measures to streamline the government, saving the government billions of dollars and eliminating 252,000 federal jobs. (Levy, p. 21)

The White House announces that it has met President Clinton's campaign promise to reduce White House staff by 25%. Critics charge that staff cuts result from creative definitions of what constitutes White House staff and from layoffs aimed at career workers rather than the political aides for which the cuts were intended. Neel, in charge of implementing the 25% cut, defends the administration's redefined baseline for tallying total White House workers. (*The Washington Post*, 09/30/1993)

November

On the 9th, Vice President Gore and Ross Perot debate NAFTA on CNN in front of a primetime audience. The debate is the culminating episode in a series of publicly-aimed discussions emanating from the White House, which include Neel's November 5 appearance on *Crossfire*. Commentators say that Gore clearly

defeats his opponent, and the White House push for NAFTA gains momentum. (Drew, p. 344) Clinton speaks to a group of black church leaders in Memphis, marking a renewed White House focus on crime and violence. Neel is part of an interagency group that coordinates Clinton's refocused perspective on this issue. Other members of the group include Deputy Attorney General Philip B. Heymann, Health and Human Services counselor Peter B. Edelman, Deputy Education Secretary Madeleine M. Kunin, and, from the White House, Gergen, Stephanopoulos, Gearan, Carol Rasco and Bruce Reed. (*The Washington Post*, 11/21/1993)

On the 17th, Congress passes NAFTA by a 234-200 vote, relying heavily on Republican support. Three days later, the Senate follows suit, with a 61-38 vote. (*The Washington Post*, 11/21/1993)

The press reports that Neel plans to resign from the White House and move to the private sector. Neel cites a desire to spend more time with his family. His decision to accept the position of CEO of the United States Telephone Association (USTA), a lobbying firm for regional and local telephone companies, sparks criticism from the media which labels the move a violation of Clinton's anti-revolving door rhetoric. (*The Washington Post*, 11/20/1993; *Wall Street Journal*, 11/24/1993)

On the 23rd, Howard Paster, the White House Congressional Liaison, announces plans to resign from the White House and return to his former company, Hill & Knowlton, as CEO. (*The Washington Post*, 11/24/1993)

December

McLarty announces that Neel will be replaced by two deputy chiefs of staff. Philip Lader will move from the Office of Management and Budget to become deputy chief of staff for White House operations, while Harold Ickes, a New York lawyer/lobbyist, will enter the administration as deputy chief of staff for policy and political affairs. (*The Washington Post*, 12/12/1993)

On the 15th, Neel and Paster leave the White House. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 12/16/1993)

1997

Neel, along with Peter Knight, Tom Downey, Jack Quinn, Bob Squier, and Marla Romash, are called in to act as a "war council" of outside advisors to the Vice President following the Thompson Committee hearings in the Senate, which are investigating allegations of misconduct on the part of Gore in his fundraising efforts for the Democratic National Committee. (Bill Turque,

Inventing Al Gore, Houghton Mifflin: New York, 2000, p. 330;
Newsweek, 09/22/97)

1998

Neel's name surfaces again as an outside adviser to Gore in the midst of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. (Turque, p. 347)

2000

September

Neel takes a temporary leave of absence from USTA in order to work on the Gore campaign team. (*RCR Wireless News Service* 09/25/00)

November

The presidential election ends without a clear winner in the presidential race, due largely to voting discrepancies in Florida. (Levy, p. 384)

Neel, described as the Vice President's "transition czar," begins to draft a list of cabinet and sub-cabinet level appointees. In addition, Neel works on directing an administrative agenda and writing an inaugural address. (*The Washington Post* 12/01/2000; *New York Times* 12/04/2000)

December

Gore concedes the election to George W. Bush following the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling that overturns the Florida Supreme Court's order to recount. (Levy, p. 384)

ROY M. NEEL SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared By Rebecca T. Kinsey and Darby Morrisroe, The Miller Center, 05/07/2002

1992 Campaign, Transition and Joining the Administration

- Origins of your relationship with Gore.
- Discuss the selection of Gore as Clinton's running mate. As Gore's chief aide in Little Rock, how did you facilitate early relations with the Clinton staff?
- Role and responsibilities during the campaign. What were the major challenges faced during the campaign?
- Describe the relationship between the Clintons and Gores on the campaign trail.
- How did this early relationship later affect their working relationship in the White House?
- What were your responsibilities during the transition period?
- Discuss your role and that of the Vice President in the cabinet selection process.
- What part did the First Lady take in cabinet selection discussions?

Chief of Staff to Vice President Gore

- Discuss your role and responsibilities as Chief of Staff to the Vice President.
- Discuss the relationships between the Vice President's staff and the White House/First Lady's staff?
- Were you involved in shaping Gore's broadened vice-presidential role?

Deputy Chief of Staff to President Clinton

- How did you come to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff to the President? Discuss the key elements of the May 191993 White House restructuring.
- What were your roles and responsibilities as Deputy Chief of Staff?
- Discuss your relationships with key White House staff (McLarty, Gearan, Gergen, Stephanopoulos, etc.). With which members of the cabinet did you work most closely?
- Describe the evolution of White House operations during your tenure.
- What issues most occupied your time as Deputy Chief of Staff (Guinier nomination, Travelgate, deficit-reduction plan, NAFTA, October 191993 staff cuts, etc.)?
- How would you characterize Clinton's leadership style as President? Describe his operating style and work habits. What kind of White House did he want? What kinds of advice/information did he seek in making policy decisions?
- Relations with the media, Congress, constituency groups, and the Republican and Democratic leadership.
- Your departure from the White House. What role did you play as an outside advisor following your departure (Gore fundraising investigation, Gore 2000 presidential bid, 2000 transition activities, etc.)?

The Clinton-Gore Administration in Retrospect

- Discuss in general terms the unique characteristics of Gore's vice presidency.
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Gore vice presidency?

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Clinton administration?
- What features of the presidency were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Clinton-Gore Administration be viewed in history?
- How would you assess Clinton as a public leader, a legislative leader and a policy president?
- How would you assess the political climate of the Clinton years?

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