



William J. Clinton Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials

Dr. Charles Brain

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**Prepared by Kelli Coughlin Schoen, Research Assistant
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CHARLES BRAIN CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS TIMELINE

Prepared by Kelli Coughlin Schoen

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/15/2004

1977 Brain serves as a legislative aide to Representative Doug Walgren (D-PA). (*1977 Congressional Staff Directory*, Mount Vernon, VA: Congressional Staff Directory, Inc., 1977)

1979 Brain becomes Chief Legislative Assistant to Representative James Shannon (D-MA). (*1979 Congressional Staff Directory*)

1981 Brain joins the staff of the House Ways and Means Committee. While on the Committee, he serves as Assistant to the Subcommittee on Social Security and Assistant to the Chairman. (*1981 Congressional Staff Directory*)

1994 Brain leaves his position as Deputy Staff Director for the House Ways and Means Committee to become a principal in the firm of Bergner, Bockorny, Castagnetti and Hawkins. He stays with the firm through 1997. (*The Washington Post*, 05/30/1994)

1998

January Brain joins the Clinton Administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and House Legislative Liaison. (*National Journal*, 01/31/1998)

Clinton uses his State of the Union Address to call on Congress to “save Social Security first,” before using the budget surplus for other projects. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 10/14/1998)

August As a House vote on campaign finance reform legislation draws near, Representative Martin Meehan (D-MA) asks Brain to give Clinton a list of key lawmakers to call before the vote. The measure passes the House on the 6th. (*The Boston Globe*, 08/04/1998)

September The Senate authorizes \$17 billion for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an amount which is close to the \$17.9 billion request made by Clinton in his State of the Union Address and in his proposed budget. Soon after, the House passes a measure approving only \$3.4 billion in additional funding for the IMF. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 09/18/1998)

November Republicans remain in control of the Congress after midterm elections, though Democrats unexpectedly narrow the Republican majority in the House. (*The Washington Post*, 11/04/1998)

<i>December</i>	On the 19 th , the House approves two articles of impeachment against the President. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 12/20/1998)
1999	
<i>January</i>	Steelworkers outside the White House protest U.S. imports of steel, which they say are purchased at well below the cost of production. During the protest, Representative Bob Ney (R-OH) approaches Secret Service members and demands to see a high-ranking White House official. Brain comes out to meet with Ney, who says afterward that he is satisfied the steelworkers' message will reach Clinton. (<i>Associated Press</i> , 01/21/1999)
<i>February</i>	Clinton sends his \$1.7 trillion budget proposal to Congress. (<i>The New York Times</i> , 02/02/1999)
	The Senate acquits Clinton of all articles of impeachment. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 02/13/1999)
<i>April</i>	Clinton signs "Ed-Flex," or the Education Flexibility Partnership Act of 1999. The law permits states to obtain waivers of some federal requirements in order to pursue their own ways of improving student performance. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 04/30/1999)
<i>September</i>	Brain remains in constant contact with House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) as the House prepares to vote on Clinton's veto of several appropriations bills. (<i>Roll Call</i> , 09/30/1999)
<i>October</i>	Brain is named Deputy Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 10/04/1999)
	The House and Senate pass the Work Incentives Improvement Act, which allows those with disabilities to keep their health benefits when working. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 10/20/1999)
<i>November</i>	Clinton signs the Financial Modernization Act to revamp the nation's banking system. (<i>Financial Times</i> , 11/16/1999)
	Brain briefs the New Democratic Coalition on the Administration's agreement to allow China into the World Trade Organization. (<i>The Hill</i> , 11/24/1999)
2000	
<i>January</i>	Clinton informs Gephardt and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) that he is appointing Brain Assistant to the President and Director for Legislative Affairs. (<i>The Washington Post</i> , 01/07/2000)

Brain receives a standing ovation from House Members after Caucus Chairman Martin Frost (D-TX) presents Brain as the new White House Director for Legislative Affairs. (*Roll Call*, 02/07/2000)

February Commerce Secretary William Daley and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Steve Ricchetti begin chairing weekly meetings to organize the Administration's push to secure permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China. The meetings include U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Charlene Barshefsky, National Economic Council Director Gene Sperling, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, and Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman. Occasional members include Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Samuel Berger, and Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, schedules permitting. (*Congress Daily*, 02/03/2000)

March Brain compiles a list of Democrats who are undecided on the PNTR legislation and divides the names among the Cabinet secretaries. He bases the list on the 110 Democrats who voted for Most Favored Nation status for China the previous year. (*Roll Call*, 03/20/2000)

Lawyers for opponents to a Longhorn Partners pipeline in Texas subpoena the email records of White House officials. The lawyers allege that an email from Brain tells colleagues that the Justice Department has advised the EPA to do an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed pipeline, otherwise the project could not withstand a court challenge. (*Austin American-Statesman*, 04/21/2002)

April Congress unanimously passes the Senior Citizen's Freedom to Work Act. The legislation abolishes a law that reduces the Social Security benefits paid to seniors by one dollar for every three dollars earned above \$17,000. (*The Washington Post*, 04/08/2000)

May A bipartisan group of seventeen Senators meets with Clinton, Brain, Ricchetti, Berger, and White House Chief of Staff John Podesta to discuss the status of the PNTR legislation. In particular, the group discusses ways to press Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) to set a "date certain" for the vote. (*The Washington Post*, 05/21/2000; *Roll Call*, 06/22/2000)

The House votes 237-197 to approve Permanent Normal Trade Relations for China. USTR Barshefsky publicly thanks Brain for his efforts to secure the bill's passage. (*White House Office of the Press Secretary*, 05/26/2000)

June Congress passes "E-Sign," or the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act, which gives contracts signed online the same

legal status as contracts signed on paper. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 06/15/2000; *The New York Times*, 06/17/2000)

- July* Clinton signs legislation closing a loophole that allows groups trying to exert pressure anonymously to collect unlimited secret contributions for political campaigns. (*The Washington Post*, 07/02/2000)
- August* Brain accompanies Clinton on his official visit to Colombia. (*U.S. Newswire*, 08/30/2000)
- September* Brain meets with lobbyists opposed to legislation that would forbid the FCC from approving any merger involving a company more than 25 percent of which is owned by a foreign government. The legislation would prevent the planned merger of Deutsche Telekom AG and VoiceStream Wireless Corporation. The White House is working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the Communications Workers of America to oppose the legislation. (*Congress Daily*, 09/28/2000)
- October* In his comments after signing PNTR with China into law, Clinton thanks Brain for his efforts to pass the legislation. (*Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 10/16/2000)
- Clinton signs the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. (*St. Louis Dispatch*, 10/29/2000)
- November* In his remarks after signing into law a bill providing \$435 million in debt relief for the world's poorest countries, Clinton thanks Brain, "who lobbied for this so heavily for us in the Congress." (*Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 11/13/2000)
- December* Congress passes the \$450 billion final budget package for 2001. (*The New York Times*, 12/17/2000)

2001

- January* The Ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee Charles Rangel (NY) hires Brain to help assemble a "kitchen cabinet" of experts to advise the Democratic Caucus as it responds to policy initiatives coming from the Bush White House. (*Roll Call*, 01/18/2001; *The Washington Post*, 02/01/2001)
- April* Brain returns to Bergner, Bockorny, Castagnetti and Hawkins, which becomes Bergner, Bochorny, Castagnetti, Hawkins and Brain. (*The Washington Post*, 04/19/2001)

2003 Brain becomes president of Capitol Hill Strategies, LLC.

CHARLES BRAIN SUGGESTED TOPICS

Prepared by Kelli Coughlin Schoen

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/11/2004

Joining the Clinton Administration

- How did you come to join the Clinton Administration?
- What features of the Office of Legislative Affairs attracted you to the Administration?

Office of Legislative Affairs

- What was your initial portfolio as House Legislative Liaison? How did that change when you were named Deputy Director and then Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs?
- Was there anything unique about the way the office was organized during your tenure? Describe how the office was set up in relation to the two chambers, geography and issue areas.
- With whom in the Administration and in Congress did you work most closely? What role did members of the Cabinet play in legislative affairs? Which Cabinet members or White House officials were especially useful for you, and which gave you the most trouble?
- How involved was Clinton in the crafting and implementation of the Administration's legislative strategy? Was there a particular method Clinton preferred to use to deal with Congress (phone calls, breakfast meetings, etc.)? Was there a particular manner or format in which Clinton preferred to receive information about legislative affairs? Did any of this change over time?
- How did the Office of Legislative Affairs get input from the White House on policy matters of concern? Were formal or informal channels used most often?
- How did the Clinton Administration use public opinion to help with the legislative agenda? On which issues did public opinion have the most impact?
- Describe your relationship with the party leadership and the role they played in the legislative process. On which issues were they most involved?
- What role did Gore play in legislative affairs? Was Hillary Clinton involved in this area?

Issues and Events

- What issues and events most occupied your time as the House Legislative Liaison in the Office of Legislative Affairs? As Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs? As Director?
- Describe the budget process and your role in it. At what point did you and your office become involved? Do any particular budget years stand out to you?
- How did the 1998 midterm elections affect legislative affairs?
- How did Clinton's impeachment affect the Administration's ability to carry out its legislative agenda? What role did you play, if any, in trying to fend off impeachment?
- Did the 2000 election campaign affect your activities?
- Were you involved in the President's final pardons decisions? If so, describe that process.

The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect

- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as Director of Legislative Affairs?
- Comment on Clinton as a legislative leader. How was Clinton perceived by members of Congress? Did he enjoy interacting with the members?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Clinton Administration?
- What features of the Clinton Administration were missed or misunderstood by the press?
- How should the Clinton Administration be viewed in history?

TIMELINES

- Charles Brain Congressional Affairs Timeline, prepared by Kelli Coughlin Schoen, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/15/2004.
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- "The Clinton Presidency: Eight Years of Peace, Progress, and Prosperity," *U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*,
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- Shirley Anne Warshaw, *The Keys to Power: Managing the Presidency* (Boston: Longman, 1999) pp. 272-295.
- Ethan Wallison, "Clinton Uses House Brain; Minority Likes President's Hill Lobbyist," *Roll Call*, 02/07/2000.

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- "Congress Fails To Agree On Budget Resolution for the Coming Fiscal Year," *1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 6-3----6-6.
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- "The President's Budget: Clinton's Strength Portends a Tough Season for the GOP," *1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 6-3----6-6.
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- "Parties' Ambitious Agendas Make Little Headway in 106th," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2001) pp. 1-3---1-6.

- "Longest Appropriations Cycle in Five Years Ends with Omnibus Spending Bill," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 2-3---2-6.
- "Bankruptcy Overhaul Bill Cleared At Eleventh Hour; Ends in Pocket Veto," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 5-3.
- "Delivering a Budget Without Breaking It: Clinton's Numbers Look Surprisingly Similar to the GOP's," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 6-3----6-6.
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- "Partisanship Proves Too Big an Obstacle in the Effort to End 'Marriage Penalty,'" *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 18-3.
- "Clinton's Vetoes Force Republicans to Scale Back Their Tax-Cut Package," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 18-32.
- "Lawmakers Hand Clinton Big Victory in Granting China Permanent Trade Status," *2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 20-3---20-24.