

10/20/00

Notes on Administrative History Outlines

- 1) US Dept. of Agriculture. Good job: clear and well-organized, although a little light on the details.

- Comments:

The outline for the introduction refers to the “big picture.” Perhaps summarizing what that is now, in the draft phase, would be helpful to those who need to write the individual pieces about policy. Doing so would orient the entire narrative around this “big picture” theme and create clarity of voice.

It might be useful to break apart each section (“21<sup>st</sup> Century Farm Policy” for instance) and specify what subheadings, in particular, will be covered and how much space will be devoted to each. This would give the writers more direction.

Plans for a conclusion are not specified here, although a conclusion may be in the works. It is advisable to have a conclusion of some sort, and the most useful may be one that thinks about the future: how have USDA policies under Clinton sketched a plan for the future. This might also be an opportunity to discuss missed opportunities or administration disappointments. We want to make sure we document these alongside the triumphs of the administration.

- 2) US Department of Commerce. Good sketch, very light on details, but that may be a function of its late submission.

- Comments:

It isn’t entirely clear what is meant by ‘overview’ in the introduction. Will this be a list of the later chapters or will it try to draw out other information about the Department’s activities in the two terms? It would be useful to use these pages not only to list what will be discussed subsequently, but to try to highlight what motivated the evolution of the individual policies (the President’s priorities, for instance, or those of the Secretaries).

The editorial team should have one person ultimately responsible for insuring a uniformity of voice and style in the writing. It looks here like that responsibility will fall to Barry Phelps.

- 3) US Department of Defense. Hard to imagine a more thorough or more detailed outline.

- Comments:

It looks as if numerous different individuals will be writing the different sections of the

Narrative. Is there an editorial process in place to assure some uniformity of tone and style?

On that same note, lengths have not been specified for each section. Who will this ultimately decide how long the document will be? Is it reasonable to think the product of such a comprehensive outline will fall within the 100 page maximum and if not, who will do the necessary cutting?

Should there be some discussion of how the Reinventing Government Project affected the DOD, perhaps in Vol. 6 ("Organizational Innovation")?

It may be useful to discuss, in the introduction, Bill Clinton's vision for a post-cold war military. There are some speeches from the 1992 campaign and the first two years of the administration that might help set the tone for really the whole history.

- 4) US Dept. of Energy. Plenty of information, if a bit vague. Hard to know how it is all going to fit into a coherent narrative.

- Comments:

The outline doesn't mention any introduction, but including one is essential. Something that encapsulates the common themes that have guided administration energy policy would set all the diverse initiatives by the three secretaries in a context. This could take the form of a forward by Secretary Richardson followed by a few introductory paragraphs that highlight the importance of the information that follows. (The October 4<sup>th</sup> speech that Sec. Richardson gave at the National Press Club offers some glimpses into the "big picture" of energy policy in this administration).

Would it be worthwhile to compare and contrast Clinton's energy policy with that of earlier administrations? Doing so might provide a nice historical backdrop to the narrative of the last eight years.

Will there be a conclusion? Though there is a legacy section under the heading of each individual secretary, it would be important to include a separate section that draws conclusions about energy policy as a whole over the two terms. This would also provide a forum for discussing the missed opportunities or lessons that the administration learned the hard way.

- 5) US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

- Comments:

The topical (rather than chronological) organization looks promising. Within each subheading, though, a roughly chronological approach might be useful to give some sense of the evolution of policy at HHS.

Because Secretary Shalala has been such a presence at HHS throughout the administration, a brief biography of her seems appropriate. This could come in the introduction, or towards the end under the "Organizational Changes / Management" heading. Including a taped interview of her might also add to the document's usefulness to future historians.

Under organizational changes, it would be useful to highlight the unique working relationship between the White House and HHS (particularly in regards to health care and welfare reform). As a truly joint effort, this was unprecedented and merits attention.

There doesn't seem to be a conclusion here. Will there be one in the final submission? It is important to include a forum for assessing the ultimate successes (and missed opportunities) of the Department.

6) US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Good outline: clear, concise, well-organized.

- Comments:

What will the introduction describe? It would be effective to use this section for a brief discussion of the Department's evolution from its creation under Johnson through the Clinton administration. Attention might be paid to the renaissance it experienced under President Clinton.

The theme of community development seems to be one that runs through many of HUD's activities and may be useful as a way to characterize the department's mission in the 1990s.

Is there a plan to cover the Aids Housing initiatives (HOPWA)? Seems like a major effort that deserves to have its history outlined.

A conclusion is necessary, but there doesn't appear to be one planned. This would be the place to summarize the Department's accomplishments, and more importantly, the missed opportunities or lessons it learned in these years.

7) US Dept. of the Interior. Excellent, truly superior. Well-organized, thorough, and thoughtful.

- Comments:

Is there a plan to have a forum in the text where missed opportunities might be discussed, as an instructive lesson for future administrations? Putting such a discussion alongside the many triumphs of Interior under the Clinton administration would enhance the narrative. Otherwise, really excellent.

8) US Dept. of Labor. Adequate sketch of the major areas to be covered, but vague on details.

- Comments:

In terms of organization, it might be more effective to insert the “Accomplishments Chapter” (what is now number 4) after the Preface and move the “Organizational and Personnel Changes” and “DOL Operations” sections back. The accomplishments are what is ultimately most important, and what will interest historians most. As much as possible, these should be the focus of the narrative; the organizational and operational changes are important as well, but perhaps belong later in the document.

The preface might be used better as a chance to highlight broad themes that have guided the Department’s work over these eight years rather than as a catalogue of policy accomplishments. What was the overarching philosophy that guided Clinton’s (and Reich’s and Herman’s) approach to labor and working people’s issues? How this manifested in specific policies can be described later on.

The idea of putting in a timeline of accomplishments is a good one. It may, for the sake of clarity, make a better appendix than a section of the preface. But in some form, it will be helpful.

Many of the proposals described were developed jointly by the White House (DPC or NEC) and Labor. It would be helpful to discuss the uniqueness of this partnership, and how it functioned to reorient the policymaking process. (Perhaps under the heading of organizational changes).

A conclusion ought to be planned. This outline suggests a narrative that ends abruptly. A conclusion would serve two purposes: to summarize major points, and to discuss the lessons learned (and the missed opportunities) in the Clinton Labor Department.

9) US Dept. of State. Superb.

- One comment only:

It doesn’t look as though a conclusion is planned, but such a section would enhance the narrative, especially if utilized as an opportunity to discuss some of the missed opportunities that might serve as lessons for future administrations.

10) US Dept. of the Treasury. Well done: clear, detailed, and concise.

- One comment, the same as above:

It doesn’t look as though a conclusion is planned, but such a section would enhance the narrative, especially if utilized as an opportunity to discuss some of the missed opportunities that might serve as lessons for future administrations.

11) US Dept. of Transportation. Detail-heavy and well-documented. At present, though, it is not clear how this will fit into a narrative of transportation policy.

- Comments:

The extensive timeline is a good exercise and serves the history well by making clear what, exactly, happened during the eight years and when. It will be helpful in filling in the holes left by a narrative that will undoubtedly have to leave out some Departmental actions.

Be sure throughout, especially in the introduction, to take an analytic approach to the policies rather than merely listing describing them. What worked, and what didn't, should be discussed as objectively as possible. Though such a discussion may be in the works, your outline does not indicate that it is.

In the section on personnel and organizational changes, it might be useful to plan a short section with brief biographies of secretaries Pena and Slater.

If more than one person is working on this history, is there an editorial process in place to insure some uniformity of style and tone?

12) US Dept. of Veteran's Affairs. Very heavy on the details but also very vague on organization.

- Comments:

It isn't really clear how this history will be organized. It might be useful to re-arrange the information under a few broad headings, like Departmental Reforms, Organizational Changes (REGO), Significant Legislation, etc. Within these, the specific initiatives may then be grouped into a few general policy areas (like Education, Training, Insurance, etc). But as it stands now, the outline seems to lack a clear organizational focus and the history might suffer as a result.

It is also advisable to plan an introduction and a conclusion that try to set the policies of VA under Clinton in some context? How did the priorities of the President and his VA secretaries differ from those of earlier presidents? What were the successes of this vision for the Department? Where did it fall short, and why? An introduction and a conclusion would offer the ideal forum to discuss issues like these and provide some narrative to the events of the last eight years and the policies that resulted.

13) National Economic Council. Excellent, among the best.

- Comments:

The plan to focus on NEC's role in executive policymaking is a good one. One of Clinton's major innovations was his campaign to streamline and centralize the planning and development of executive action in the White House. Obviously NEC was a major player in this restructuring and this organizational history is as important as the policy history. On this note, it might be helpful to include in the introduction a discussion of the origins of the NEC, how earlier administrations formulated economic policy and what motivated Clinton to create this new White House Council.

The chronological approach seems to work really well here. The '92 campaign provides a nice prism through which to analyze how economic policy unfolded, as well as how the strategy changed, over the two terms.

Stay true to the plan set forth for the conclusion. Avoid self-congratulation and try to think about where the policies fell short, and why.

14) Office of Management and Budget. Good job, clear and logical.

- Comments:

This outline sketches a history that will be informative, useful to future researchers, and highly readable. While most of it seems to be well-detailed already, there are some spots that are vague. I would encourage you to hammer out some specific points to make under each heading. For instance, in 1998, be specific about what you want to say when detailing the first budget surplus in 30 years. How did this affect the OMB, and Administration-wide policy? It will help the writers to have a clear sense of this as they begin drafting their sections.

It would be interesting to see some discussion of Clinton's changes in policymaking within the White House (creating the NEC and DPC, for instance). These developments had a direct impact on OMB and ought to be discussed. How has the policymaking role of OMB changed from what it was under earlier administrations?

Is there an editorial process in place to insure some uniformity of voice and style? With so many writers, it is important that someone take responsibility for overseeing the style of the final product.

15) Council of Economic Advisers. A rough draft of the history, not only an outline. IT NEEDS ANOTHER READING.

- Preliminary comments:

Takes a thorough, meticulous approach that leaves almost no detail untouched. Will be a great record of the CEA for historians. It does need, however, some discussion of the philosophy that guided these policies. What made Clinton's approach to economic policy different from his predecessors and what role did the CEA play in trying to analyze, interpret, and clarify this approach?

With the creation of the NEC, the CEA took on a slightly different role than it had under previous administrations. These changes to the policymaking process in the White House, and their effect on the work of the CEA should be made clearer in the narrative.

Stylistically, the narrative seems choppy at points (probably a reflection of it still being a rough draft). On many pages, for instance, every paragraph begins "The Council..." Editing it for style is something you may want to do as the project evolves.

16) US Trade Representative. Excellent work; a very clear, comprehensive, and effective outline that presents the policies in detail but also highlights some bigger themes as well. A great blueprint for an interesting history.

- Comments:

I applaud the introduction ("Clinton's Trade Vision") and would encourage that theme throughout. Be sure to place Clinton in a historical context by discussing trade policy under earlier administrations and how his approach has been different. Likewise, it might be instructive to plan for a conclusion that highlights this vision and suggests where it might lead future policymakers.

In part II, be sure – again – to discuss the changing economic context in which Clinton operated (as you plan to do in part IV). The revolutionary nature of the information economy, and its effects on trade policy are clear enough to us, but may need emphasis for the historians who will be looking at this decades from now.

You might want to think about how trade policy fits into Clinton's general views on foreign policy. Perhaps the first globalist to occupy the office, one of his major achievements was engaging the US in the world economy in ways previously unimaginable. It might be argued that this approach to trade mirrored his overall effort to engage the US directly in world affairs and making these connections clear would surely enhance your history.

17) Social Security Administration. [Reads more like an inventory of documents (or a table of contents) than the outline of a history. Is this the list of documentation to be attached to the history or the history itself. I can't tell. Beyond the restructuring of the SSA, I don't really know what they are going to say. Perhaps we should just be happy that we are getting something from them and not be too picky?]

18) Small Business Association. Good work. The outline has a clear thematic focus (expanding business opportunity) and offers good detail to support that focus.

- Comments:

“Opening the doors of economic opportunity” and serving small businesses of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be the theme throughout. I was pleased to see this highlighted at the beginning. It's important to focus on Clinton's vision of economic development on the whole, and how this manifested itself in the SBA. This theme, I think, is particularly clear in the New Markets Initiative.

You might do more to place Clinton in a historical context: how did his policies towards small business differ from those of his predecessors, and how did these policies affect SBA as an agency?

When discussing the modernization of the administration, be sure to mention that the streamlining process came as part of Clinton's overall Reinventing Government project.

The section on personnel and organizational changes ought to include brief biographies of the Administrators President Clinton appointed.

A conclusion of some sort makes sense. This would be especially good if it offered a forum to discuss the lessons learned over the last eight years, what has worked for this administration and what hasn't? This would act as a guide to future policymakers.

19) Office of Personnel Management. Good work, it seems that they have put thought into this and have a clear picture of what they intend to do.

- Comments.

The focus on streamlining (and “reinventing”) government is the key here. It seems that Clinton's real legacy in this sense is the model he put forth for a smaller but more effective government, and OPM was certainly at the center of this effort. Be sure to emphasize this theme throughout the history.

Supporting a family-friendly workplace is evidence of how Clinton's effort to make the Federal Government the nation's “model employer” manifested itself in areas like enforcing child support payments, child and health care for its employees, and family-supportive offices (see Executive Order 12953 on child support and the memorandum of

June 2, 1996 on family-friendly work arrangements). This, again, is a theme that should be emphasized.

Be sure that with multiple writers, an editorial process is in place to insure uniformity of style and voice. The person who is overseeing the collection of documents, John Fenzel, may be a good candidate for this task.

20) Office of National Drug Control Policy. Not very detailed or very specific. Nor is there evidence of much thought having gone into this.

- Comments:

Place the National Drug Control Strategy in a context: when did it originate, how did Clinton seek to change it, and how did his efforts manifest themselves in specific policies? What made Clinton's approach different from that of his predecessors?

Try to minimize repeating statistics that are readily available elsewhere. In particular, Part V seems to promise a summary of the national surveys of drug use. A better approach might be to append the surveys (or selections from them) to the document and leave the narrative for analysis of the successes (and shortcomings) of Clinton's drug policy.

21) General Services Administration. Good as far as it goes. I suspect it's not the most fascinating story to tell, but they do a fairly good job of working with what they've got.

- Comments:

The approach here seems to be (and should be) to emphasize how President Clinton encouraged streamlining the GSA and the administration's success in doing so.

It might also be useful, especially in the Personnel Statistics section, to think about how the President cultivated a diverse federal government, and how the GSA succeeded in reflecting the composition of the public it serves.

22) Council on Environmental Quality. Not detailed at all, hard to make suggestions based on such little information. My guess is we should be happy with whatever we get from these folks.

Labor - Nafta, China trade bill,  
efforts to expand trade in line  
with labor standards (go into their  
disapproval of Wt politics)

State - Refer to history of Bosnia (still  
classified) so that future historians  
will have it.

ONDCP - Colombia Plan needs to get  
documented.

CEQ - Call to see if any

23) Federal Emergency Management Administration. Great work, very comprehensive and thoughtful.

- Comments:

The story of FEMA's renaissance is one of the great accomplishments of the Clinton administration. It is important that this story be set in the appropriate context. Be sure to use the introduction to analyze how and why the Agency came to need such dramatic reform and how Clinton (with Witt) accomplished this reform. Why were other administrations less successful in this endeavor?

A conclusion to this history is essential, and I hope one is being planned. There are many lessons in this story and future policymakers need to hear them. Make sure to draw out the lessons of the past eight years in a conclusion.

24) Environmental Protection Agency. Very good. Clear, concise, and logical.

- Comments:

Given the VP's active interest in environmental matters, it would enhance this history to have some analysis of how the unique relationship between this President and Vice-President affected environmental policy (as part of a larger restructuring that swept the executive branch in the first term).

The timeline idea is a good one. It might also be helpful, though, to draw out some of the major, instructive points in a short conclusion.

General  
Comments  
for  
all

Timelines -

- Some kind of timeline / organizational chart ~~that~~ would be good.
- Letters from principals
- Keep stressing the focus on innovations in governments.
- Remind people about what historians care about

Specifics -

Ag - How did changes in global economy affect Ag policy?

Com - Internet affects on

Defense - Is NMD in here?

Energy - OPEC, alternative crs?, Los Alamos,  
Caspian Sea Pipeline (Baku-Ceyhan pipeline).  
This should be in there

HHS - '93 Health care, '96 Welfare

HUD - Gun buyback program

Interior - Land-buying initiatives?