

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

THE VOICE OF THE NORTHWEST SINCE 1863

A HEARST NEWSPAPER

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White House will pay visit to Bellevue

The White House called this week.

With approximately 5,280 (a rough estimate) people and phones at the White House, it figures they have to call somebody sometime.

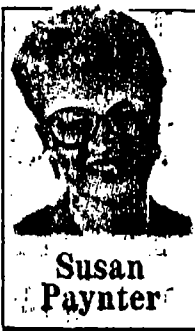
Still, if they're honest, even jaded and jowled reporters admit it's a bit of a jolt when a caller says that.

Amazingly, it didn't happen that often during the Bush or Reagan years. They didn't call. They didn't write.

But Bill Clinton's minions call and write semi-often.

This time it was Lori McRea Keller, formerly of Bellevue, now of the Clinton administration. Specifically, she's a special assistant at the Department of Commerce in the Office of the Chief Economist. Her first White House job, just after inauguration, was working with Commerce Secretary Ron Brown.

Even administration elves are allowed to go home for the holidays — if they promise to do something productive besides shopping at Nordstrom.



Susan
Paynter

There's a new office in the White House — The Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach. Opened in September, it's run by Betsy Myers, sister of former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers.

To rake together grass-roots info for that office regarding issues of concern to women, female members of the administration are asked to hold round tables in their hometowns during vacations.

For Keller, this one's also a "vacation" in terms of "please vacate the premises immediately." "As you know," her message machine says, "the Commerce Department is one of seven agencies that do not have a budget and, as a result, most of us are on furlough." On furlough, but still on duty.

On Thursday between noon and 2 p.m. Keller will be host to a round table at the Bellevue Regional Library. Y'all come. Participants so far include the president of the Seattle League of Women Voters and members of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce. Turns out the president of the Bellevue C of C, Sarah (Halin) Skoglund, is an old UDub classmate of Keller's. But, due to use of her married name, Keller didn't know it until she called.

Keller is also sporting a new name. The daughter of Bellevueites Roger and Diane McRea is a newlywed. She says she met her husband "at work." He's an Air Force pilot who flies Secretary Brown around on Air Force Two.

Keller says rest assured all "input" from the round table will be read by the big cheese policy wonk at the White House. Well, she didn't say it quite that way. But, Keller says, the president "is such a reader. He loves these reports."

SECTION

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TIPS ON GETTING MEDIA COVERAGE FOR YOUR *AT THE TABLE* OUTREACH MEETINGS

If you have not worked closely with the media before, please call Mary Dixon in the Women's Office at 202-456-7300. We will give you media contacts and advice.

Strategies for Pitching Your Roundtable

- o **Prepare a News Release:** Prepare a news release announcing your roundtable to fax to all local media: television, radio, newspapers, specialty and trade press. See the **sample news release in your *At the Table* kit** or call us. Whenever calling the media to come cover your roundtable, have a news release ready to fax to them. They will always want to see the information on paper. In addition to what the sample news release suggests that you include, add the names of the participants if you have them. If not -- just tell the editor or reporter the time, date and place.
- o **Photos:** If you are not comfortable having the roundtable covered by a reporter, try placing just a photo. Call a weekly newspaper to come take a photograph or maybe take your own photograph of the participants at the table and submit it later to a local newspaper.
- o **Local Angle:** Emphasize the local angle while giving the national angle, too. Simply: To convince a reporter to cover the roundtable, explain that **local women are participating in a national initiative.**
- o **Emphasize that this is a White House initiative:** Always emphasize that a report will be sent from your roundtable to the White House and that monthly reports are being compiled and sent to the President and other policy-makers throughout the White House.
- o **You are the President's Representative:** The bottom line -- as a Presidential appointee always remember that you are representing the President.
- o **We're Here to Help:** If you have questions you can't answer about the **At the Table** initiative, call Mary Dixon in the Women's Office at 202-456-7300 or have the reporter call her directly.

Who To Call for Press

- o **Local and Special-Interest Papers:** Always reach out to the local weekly newspapers and the specialty press (i.e., a Women's magazine, African-American newspaper, Hispanic or Asian-American) as well as the trade press. If you have businesswomen at your table, call the local business publication. In many cities, there are women business publications you should contact. As Peggy Lewis in White House Media Affairs reminds us: **Think inclusive and not exclusive when contacting the media.**

- o **Women's Issues Reporters:** When deciding which reporter to call at a newspaper, try asking who covers women and family issues. They may be your best bet.
- o **Columnists:** Consider calling a columnist at the local newspaper. They are always looking for column ideas and this will give them an opportunity to come hear the concerns of the local women in their community.
- o **Suburban Editions:** Most large metropolitan newspapers have suburban editions. If you are holding a roundtable in a suburban area, see if the larger newspaper in the area has a suburban bureau there. Call the main number of the newspaper and ask for the bureau number. Then call the reporters in that bureau and ask them to cover your roundtable.
- o **Talk Radio:** Contact a local talk radio show host, especially if there is a woman talk show host in the area. See if you can get an interview before or after the roundtable. **Remember interviews are not pop quizzes.** You don't have to know all the answers. Simply answer the questions you know and say you will get back to them with the answers you don't know.
- o **Specific Topics:** If your roundtable is on a specific topic, like domestic violence, find out the reporters in your area who cover that topic usually and target them.
- o **TV:** If you want television coverage, contact the local television stations by calling and asking for the assignment editor. Tell the editor that the White House is holding a roundtable with local women to discuss their concerns. Tell them who will be there and give them a little background on the *At the Table* initiative.

**PLEASE ALWAYS FAX OR MAIL ANY NEWS CLIPS FROM YOUR ROUNDTABLE
TO THE WOMEN'S OFFICE: FAX: 202-456-7311.**

**THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE FOR WOMEN'S INITIATIVES AND OUTREACH
708 JACKSON PLACE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503**

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

**SUGGESTED LOCAL RESOURCES for
AT THE TABLE OUTREACH MEETINGS**

- o Your neighbors and family friends (e.g., your mother's bridge club).
- o Your high school and college acquaintances.
- o Local chapters of women's organizations, such as: League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, National Organization of Women (NOW), Women's Political Caucus, Junior League, Garden Clubs, Society of Women Engineers, Business & Professional Women's Club, Eastern Star, Council of Jewish Women, etc. (Think of organizations in which you, your mom or your grandmothers have participated.)
- o Other local organizations: Parent-Teacher Association, Chamber of Commerce, Jay Cees, Urban League, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the women's section of state or local bar associations, medical societies, NAACP, Anti-Defamation League, labor unions, groups of educators, schools, etc.
- o Churches or synagogues and religious organizations for women, including women's "circles" and groups of women with young children. Churches and synagogues may have their own day care programs or community centers where/through which local mothers and elderly women may be contacted.
- o Neighborhood groups, like Neighborhood Watch and neighborhood associations.
- o Mayor and/or Governor's Women's Office or Women's Commission.
- o Women elected officials and women appointed officials.
- o Women's newspapers or press.
- o Nursing homes, retirement homes or other institutions where many women live and have trouble getting out.
- o Colleges/Universities in your area or your Alma Mater: Contact the Dean's Office, the student government association or the college women's center.
- o Government-related groups of women: government-employees organization, WIC, Head Start, etc. You may be able to locate these sources by calling the local welfare office, i.e., AFDC, the local school superintendent's office, etc.

Please also tell us of any local women leaders you know whom we can ask to serve as contacts for helping set up *At The Table* meetings for other appointees.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR WOMEN LEADERS

FROM: BETSY MYERS
Deputy Assistant to the President and Director for
Women's Initiatives and Outreach

RE: ***AT THE TABLE***, A NATIONWIDE WOMEN'S OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Women across America are eager to share their concerns with the White House and to know that the President hears their input.

In November, my office launched *At The Table* -- a nationwide outreach project in which women appointees in the Clinton Administration meet with small groups of local women and then carry their concerns back to the President. The goal of this effort is to reach out to women around the nation and to get their ideas and concerns to the President and his policy staff inside the White House.

At The Table involves women appointees in the Clinton Administration meeting with local women for a "roundtable" discussion about issues and policies important to women and their families. After each roundtable, the women appointees submit a report to the White House detailing women's top concerns. Women appointees are the President's best representatives and most logical "ear" for listening to women and carrying their voices to the White House.

We need your help to reach the women in your community! Please consider serving as a local contact for the White House's *At the Table* initiative. We will contact you when women appointees come to your community and need help reaching out to local women to participate in the roundtable. We will put you directly in touch with the appointee and the two of you will work out the details.

There are several ways your local expertise can make this roundtable discussion a success:

- o Help the appointee select and invite local women participants for the discussion (please emphasize diversity and remember this is non-partisan).
- o Help the appointee select and reserve a location for the roundtable (e.g., your office, the local YWCA, a restaurant).
- o Help the appointee contact local media, such as neighborhood newspapers or women's radio talk shows.

We must stress that *At The Table* is not a political activity and may not be used as such; rather, it is part of the Administration's non-partisan efforts to include women in government policy and to share women's input with the President. This is about giving women the opportunity to share with the White House their top concerns.

As always, please keep my office abreast of how your plans are developing and let us know if we can do anything to help. Our number is: (202) 456-7300.

We want to keep your work down to a minimum so please work closely with your appointee. And thank you again for helping us give women a voice *At the Table*.

Please send us the below information (even if you think we know how to reach you):

Yes! I will serve as the White House women's contact for *At The Table* in my community:

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work Phone: _____

Home Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Please return to:
The White House
Office for Women's Initiatives & Outreach
Betsy Myers, Director
708 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503
(202) 456-7300
Fax: (202) 456-7311

The Washington Post

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1995 C25

JUDY MANN

At the Table With American Women

The Clinton administration's political appointees are listening to women at round tables across the country and they are hearing more concern about the impact of proposed welfare cuts than they anticipated.

"They are very concerned that their families and children will be the losers with the budget cuts and with block granting," says Betsy Myers, the deputy assistant to the president who is directing the administration's women's initiatives. "Women want welfare reform, but they . . . do not want a welfare bill signed as it currently stands, because of the adverse impact on women and the poor."

"They want more money for child care and more money in the training programs. They want a safety net for poor women and children. Most women are sensitized to the fact that no one is saving as much money as they should be. They are all a couple of paychecks away from the street. This person on welfare could be you. We are hearing that kind of concern all over the country."

As director of the office for women's business ownership in the Small Business Administration, Myers held round tables to listen to women in business, and she found that access to capital was the biggest hurdle for the 1,600 women who start businesses each day. "We were able to increase [SBA] lending by 86 percent for women. But we were only able to do that when we looked at the numbers and saw that only 8 percent of the loans from SBA were going to women."

After she was appointed to the White House staff in June, Myers started the series of "At the Table" meetings among appointees and women in cities across the country to ensure that the concerns that affect women's daily lives are voiced in policy decisions. To date, 57 round tables have been held. Many of the appointees held meetings when they returned home to visit their families during Thanksgiving, and more than 150 are scheduled during the holidays. An important side goal of the meetings is to inform women about the government programs that can be useful to them, and to tell them about the Clinton administration's initiatives on their behalf, ranging from increased funding for breast cancer research to an office for women veterans.

Domestic violence, including child abuse, is "a huge issue," Myers says. Both the president and Vice President Gore have participated in events

focused on domestic violence recently.

Gore and his wife, Tipper, have been hosts for round tables, as have Hillary Rodham Clinton, White House Chief of Staff Leon E. Panetta, Attorney General Janet Reno, Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence H. Summers. Some "At the Table" meetings have been held through a partnership with local chapters of the National Association of Women Business Owners, and Myers said her office is looking for other partners as well.

The appointees file reports on the round tables and Myers's office digests the findings in a monthly summary to the president. The relative emphasis women place on such issues as child care and domestic violence "can help us in budget negotiations," says Myers.

Education is one of the issues "brought up all the time," she says. "Women feel we need to invest in early childhood education. Safety in schools is a big issue." She found that education cuts that directly affected them were on the minds of teenagers at a school for unwed mothers in Chicago. "They want to stay in school, get jobs and not be dependent on the welfare system."

"We want to get a pulse of what women are thinking across the country," says Myers. "We can't expect a lot of change if we don't bring the information in."

The administration's outreach to women stands in marked contrast to its first two years, when it managed (with help from the media) to keep its initiatives on behalf of women one of Washington's best-kept secrets. The resounding silence with which women greeted the Democratic Party at the polls last year was no surprise to veteran women Democratic operatives who had warned the administration not to take the women's vote for granted.

The Republican takeover of Congress "was a wake-up call," says Myers.

The women's vote will be crucial in the 1996 election, and the Clinton administration is finally taking the necessary steps to differentiate its progressive policies on behalf of women from the reactionary positions of the prevailing segment of the Republican Party. "We are seeing an acknowledgment of the importance of women as constituents," says Myers.

It's the kind of grass-roots style that put Clinton in the White House in the first place.