

John D. Podesta

John D. Podesta serves in the Clinton Administration as Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary. He also serves as a member of the Council of the Administrative Conference of the United States.

Before joining the Administration he was President and General Counsel of Podesta Associates, Inc., a Washington, D.C. government relations and public affairs firm.

He has had extensive Capitol Hill experience, serving as Chief Counsel to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and as Chief Minority Counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittees on Patents, Copyrights and Trademarks; Security and Terrorism; and Regulatory Reform.

He served as a trial attorney in the Department of Justices's Land and Natural Resources Division and as a Special Assistant to the Director of ACTION, the federal volunteer agency.

He is a 1976 graduate of Georgetown University Law Center and a 1971 graduate of Knox College. John is married to Mary S. Podesta, a Washington attorney. They have three children.

Encyclopedia of the American Presidency

Editors

LEONARD W. LEVY
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Volume 4



SIMON & SCHUSTER

A Paramount Communications Company

New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

14. White House "Czars." If a momentous problem slams itself onto the presidential agenda, making the nation apprehensive, provoking calls for swift response, and cutting widely across departmental jurisdictions, a President will be tempted to take quick, and at least symbolic, action—often appointing a "czar" right in the White House. Eisenhower used this technique often, and his successors have done likewise. Some positions, such as the "Drug Czar," have been authorized by Congress.

15. The First Lady. Students of the American presidency should never underestimate the policy role of the President's spouse. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT traveled widely and wrote a newspaper column; ROSALYNN CARTER attended Cabinet meetings; NANCY REAGAN hosted a world summit conference of first ladies; and BARBARA BUSH had an active schedule of public appearances. FIRST LADIES have some thirty-five assistants to help them.

16. The Vice President. After Harry S. Truman's experience of becoming President without any executive branch experience in 1945, Vice Presidents have increasingly become advisers to the President and participants in the work of the administration. Under John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson became the first Vice President to move his office and staff into the White House environs. Under Jimmy Carter, Vice President WALTER MONDALE was the first whose advice was truly welcomed; the Ronald Reagan and George Bush presidencies followed the Carter-Mondale model. In the early 1990s the Vice President's staff numbered about one hundred, and even the Vice President's spouse had a staff. Most of the President's information is shared with the Vice President, who has been made a statutory member of the National Security Council and participates in important White House meetings.

17. The Staff Secretary. First created under Eisenhower in 1953, the Staff Secretary regulates the flow of papers into the OVAL OFFICE, enforcing the internal system of circulating draft speeches and papers for staff comment.

18. The Office of Cabinet Affairs. This office handles external coordination with the departments and agencies, sending option memoranda and speech drafts out for comment and issuing the periodic "Cabinet Report" to which agency heads contribute. The full Cabinet meets rarely, but CABINET COUNCILS and subgroups convene constantly, and the Cabinet Secretary and assistants provide the executive secretariat services to these groups. This office also began under Eisenhower in 1953.

19. The Personal Office Assistants. One or two secretaries and a personal assistant sit outside the

President's door, the former performing standard secretarial duties, the latter handling the myriad daily personal details for the boss: making sure that the schedule is being followed, that people whose presence the President is going to acknowledge will in fact be on hand, and that a presidential request, made while walking to or from the office, is put into the action system.

20. The Chief of Staff. Most centripetal of all, the CHIEF OF STAFF is the system manager, "boss of none but the quarterback of everything." The Chief of Staff does not command any other senior White House staff officer, but his personal antennae reach into every corner of the place. He enforces the indispensable coordination across all of the sixteen principal offices described above. Since it is the Chief of Staff who so often has to say "no"—to inadequate papers, beseeching visitors, or proposed appointees—he swiftly makes many more enemies than friends.

Support Staff. Undergirding these twenty offices are the professional support units of the contemporary White House, including the Secret Service details (involving eight hundred personnel, with others borrowed as needed), the thirteen-hundred-person Military Office (with ten specialized subunits, e.g., Air Force One, the doctor, the mess, CAMP DAVID, and the eight-hundred-person White House Communications Agency), the Chief Usher (who manages the mansion), the Executive Clerk, and the Correspondence, Gifts, Telephone, and Visitors offices. The number of people in the entire White House Staff community totals some thirty-four hundred. Many are assigned or detailed from other agencies. In addition, five hundred volunteers help out part time.

Every White House staff will inevitably reflect the style and working habits of the President. The offices are often renamed and the lines of supervision rejiggered. But these twenty principal functions are such basic responsibilities of the White House that future Presidents are not likely to abolish any of them outright.

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BRADLEY H. PATTERSON, JR.

WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF. Up until the advent of WORLD WAR II the White House still served

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Briefing on Paperflow

OUTLINE

I. PURPOSE

Provide a general briefing that focuses on the way the White House paper flow system is currently managed. After discussing the resources available to manage the system, the overall principles applied in making the myriad decisions, the staff secretary's function will be reviewed. The discussion of paperflow will be preceded by very briefly touching on those other organizations that presently report to the Assistant to the President for Operations.

II. OVERVIEW

- A. White House Military Office
- B. Office of Administration
- C. White House Operations
- D. White House Secretariat/Staff Secretary

III. PAPERFLOW

- A. Adaptation to a President's style
 - 1. system is flexible
 - 2. President can always handle paper outside the system if he chooses
 - 3. President chooses which material he sees
 - 4. President determines how much time he needs to review various materials and when he wants them
- B. Staff Secretary/White House Secretariat Organization
 - 1. Overall size of office
 - small enough to ensure thorough knowledge of status of materials by every person in office
 - 2. Executive Clerk
 - provides institutional memory of official Presidential actions
 - prepares and dispatches all official documents
 - 3. Presidential Correspondence
 - routinely answers thousands of letters daily
 - flags substantive letters and/or VIP letters
 - prepares proclamations, Presidential friends letters, Congressional courtesy letters, etc.
 - if Correspondence is doing its job, we see only a tiny percentage of mail

Dawson met with Gov. Sununu 12/9/88. A copy of the memo is in the Executive Sec's folder.

4. Records Management
 - provides, within moments, files from any staff on given subject
 - repository for all White House office records; offices must send everything to files in order to maintain a useful records system
 - ensures White House compliance with Presidential Records Act
- C. Principles of Paperflow
 1. assure appropriate Presidential involvement
 2. assure quality control, fairness, thoroughness
 3. assure early warning and timeliness
 4. assure fair participation by relevant parties
 5. encourage integration and consistency across issues
 6. assure authoritative recording of Presidential actions
 7. assure appropriate implementation of decisions
 8. allow monitoring of status of Presidential paper
- D. History of Staff Secretary
 1. Eisenhower created position in White House
 2. Kennedy and Johnson didn't have staff secretary
 3. Nixon -- Haldeman used junior people for position
 4. Ford -- similar to Nixon; part of COS staff
 5. Carter had chaotic paperflow system; junior staff secretary
 6. Reagan -- first-term staff secretary was Deputy Chief of Staff (Darman); second-term was close aide with immediate access to COS Regan (Chew)
- E. Universe of Presidential Paperwork
 1. Official documents (Tab A)
 2. Speeches/remarks
 3. Enrolled bills
 4. Daily schedule material
 5. NSC communications
 6. DPC/EPC decisions
 7. Personnel actions
 8. Press announcements (Presidential and Press Sec.)
 9. Substantive correspondence

F. Office Requirements

1. Clout/Access to Chief of Staff
 - staff secretary must pull weight with staff in meeting deadlines and encouraging thoughtful input
 - should have complete backing of Chief of Staff in order to discourage end-runs
2. Authority over Speechwriting
 - suggest this office have administrative responsibility for Speechwriting office
3. Recommended skills/strengths
 - commitment to President's goals
 - familiarity with President's personal style and preferences for paperwork
 - command of detail in large volume
 - discretion with press, agencies, and outside world; handling of President's paperwork is very personal and should be closely held
 - ability to work well with all senior staff

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THE RING OF POWER

The White House Staff
and Its Expanding Role
in Government

BRADLEY H. PATTERSON, JR.

Basic Books, Inc., Publishers

NEW YORK

THE STAFF SECRETARY

For internal coordination, the staff secretary is the initial control point. The first Hoover Commission proposed this office in 1949; it was established under Eisenhower and has been continuously a part of the White House staff since 1969.

If an option memorandum or Cabinet Council paper is heading for the president's attention, the staff secretary circulates it among the White House offices which should see it, requiring comment within a specified deadline. (Some sensitive NSC documents and occasionally other confidential proposals are handled separately, but the Iran-contra affair illustrated the risk a president runs when his own coordination control point is short-circuited.) If a speech draft is newly prepared, it gets the same treatment. Should policy differences surface, they are flagged early for extra attention.

The staff secretary (and the chief of staff if need be) will subject papers for the president to a tough procedural scrutiny. Are memoranda verbose? Are they larded with extraneous details? Has the author slanted the options, including a favored "Option I" balanced only by three "clunkers" instead of genuine alternatives? Explained one Reagan aide, "We want to professionalize the process."

The staff secretary attends staff meetings, for example, Sherman Adams' regular staff assemblies and Reagan's Monday "weekly update" sessions, to sharpen his sensitivity about what is going on and to note down all the action assignments.

Each afternoon the staff secretary assembles the president's "Daily Book." On top is the schedule for the next day; under tabs or in folders are the briefing papers for every presidential appointment: a speech, a meeting, a taping, a photo session. (The staff's proposed "talking points" for meetings are often specific to a fault. Johnson reportedly required presentation proposals for international conferences to be written in "Texas language" so he could read them aloud; Reagan's staff went so far as to write out first-person wording for him to use at even the most mundane appointments.⁴ On the scene, in person, however, presidents usually escape from the confinements of their cues and extemporize with their own personal warmth.)

Each event's "action officer" has been in charge of all the preparations, both substantive and logistical; the action officer will sit in on most of the Oval Office meetings that are held, to record the decision. "Should sit in"

perhaps, rather than "will." If the practice of leaking is pervasive, this essential staff service will suffer. Former Chief of Staff Donald Regan observed that during his time at the White House, leaks "had achieved such epidemic proportions that the inner circle was afraid to take notes lest they read them next day in the newspapers or hear them broadcast over the networks." He added:

In the past, confidential clerks sat in the Oval Office with notebook in hand, recording the exchanges between Presidents and some of their visitors. This provided a record to support or correct the President's memory of events and an aide-memoire to history. No such record can exist, however, except in conditions of inviolable confidentiality. And no such condition existed or was even imaginable in the White House that I knew.⁵

Finally, the staff secretary is the funnel for papers coming back out of the Oval Office. If a decision is marked or notes scribbled on briefing papers, he scoops up the inscribed documents, notifies those concerned of the chief executive's action, and builds the archival record.

THE OFFICE OF CABINET AFFAIRS

The external coordination circuit is managed in the Office of Cabinet Affairs; it connects with the respective chiefs of staff who are resident in each Cabinet department. Eisenhower began this system, too, in the fall of 1954.⁶

While meetings of the full Cabinet (described in chapter 2) may not always fit a president's style, the Office of Cabinet Affairs is still the primary guarantor that Cabinet members will be consulted on all presidential business (other than the separately handled NSC papers and in the other instances where special secrecy has been mandated). Working in parallel with the staff secretary, the same Cabinet Council papers, option memoranda, and draft speeches are sent by the Office of Cabinet Affairs to the affected departments.

In a "morning briefing" system, each departmental chief of staff is expected to send in a daily note alerting the Office of Cabinet Affairs what the "lead issue" is expected to be in the department that day. "The Department of Justice is the worst," commented one Cabinet affairs official, who must therefore scout behind the "nothing to report" notices with telephone calls to ferret out what otherwise might take the White House by

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 2, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: DON RUMSFELD
FROM: JERRY JONES
SUBJECT: Job Responsibilities

Below is a brief outline of the responsibilities of the Office of the Staff Secretary. If you want to get a detailed understanding of each of the areas, I suggest we take a piece at a time over the next two weeks so I can show you all relevant paperwork within each activity.

I. PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS

-- Administer the flow of memoranda to and from the President. This includes staffing to see that all relevant inputs are included; checking for correct format, thoroughness, and accuracy. It also includes transmitting requests or notes from the President to members of the staff.

II. ACTION REQUESTS

-- Following up on all action requests for the President or Chief of Staff. This includes receiving written reports of all Presidential requests.

III. ADMINISTRATION

-- Administer and supervise White House budget including preparation of monthly and quarterly reports.

-- Administer the hiring of White House secretarial and professional personnel. All professional personnel are cleared with the Chief of Staff prior to hiring.

-- Supervise all White House support personnel through the Chief Executive Clerk. Support personnel include Messengers, Personnel Office, Accounting, Mail Room, Central Files, etc.

- Liaison with GSA and the telephone company for all work in the White House complex.
- Allocation of space in the East Wing, West Wing, the Old and New Executive Office Buildings, and the buildings on Jackson Place.
- Allocation of perquisites -- including Mess memberships, transportation, Health Unit, etc.
- Approval of all travel requests and vouchers for travel for staff members.
- Clear all communications to the staff.
- Direct expenditure of the funds provided by the Republican National Committee. These funds are used in lieu of appropriated funds for payment of expenses incurred for political activities.
- Supervise Archives Unit on Presidential papers project.
- Supervise Visitors Office (Mike Farrell).
- Oversee all operations of the Military Aide's Office on matters other than Presidential travel.
- Initiate lowering of American Flags, closing of Federal buildings, and releasing Federal employees in case of snow warning.

IV. SPECIAL PROJECTS

These vary over time but have in the past included:

- Oversee White House computer operation and specific White House applications.
- Establishing Central Research Library in EOB.
- Lighting exterior of buildings around Jackson Place.
- Planning White House Swimming Pool.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 2, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR STAFF

FROM: JOHN PODESTA
MARCIA HALE

SUBJECT: PAPERFLOW II

For the most part, thanks to the cooperation of the staff, the paperflow system outlined in the January 22, 1993 memo has been working and serving the President and the staff. We have encountered several problems which need to be addressed. Primarily, these problems have involved clearance of speeches and preparation of materials for the briefing book. Solutions to these problems are discussed below. On occasion, however, problems stem from people trying to end run the system. The only solution to that is to cut it out, which we would encourage you to do.

Speeches and Statements

We have already encountered legal problems resulting from failure to clear speeches. We are going to try to continue following the system outlined in the January 22, 1993 memo but with the following enforcement mechanisms.

Deadlines for drafts of statements of the President and speeches will be set to provide enough lead time for at least a quick review by the substantive and legal shops. Communication will route speeches using a routing slip to facilitate tracking of who has received the draft. Podesta will receive drafts of all statements and speeches and will ensure that White House Counsel has had a crack at the speech unless clearly unnecessary. To facilitate expeditious handling, one person (player to be named) in Counsel's office will be designated to clear statements. Communications will clear statements with substantive staff. Staff clearances will be obtained prior to forwarding to the President for his approval. Communication will provide copies of texts that have been edited by the President and background materials which will be publicly released to the substantive staff and Staff Secretary.

Please note that forms were distributed with previous paperflow memo and they are attached again. I urge you to follow these forms. We are not trying to be silly, scolds or schoolmarms. We are dealing with the President of the United States. Documents going to the President should look professional and be in a consistent format. It will save us all time if we can avoid our having to ask people to redo their memos.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Attachments

Attachment V

TELEPHONE CALL RECOMMENDATION
(Format)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DATE (centered)

RECOMMENDED TELEPHONE CALL

TO: Name and telephone number of person you recommend be called with brief identifying information only when you suspect name will be unfamiliar to the President.

DATE: Date and time the President should make the call.

RECOMMENDED BY: Your name and if recommendation has concurrence of another staff member, so state.

PURPOSE: Preferably one sentence; two at most.

BACKGROUND: Whatever background information you feel will be helpful to the President. Usually 3-4 short sentences will suffice to set the stage and give substance to talking points. Also, make sure that no letter has been sent by Correspondence for the same purpose as the call.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

1. (The specific points that you recommend be made during the conversation)
2. /
- 3.
- 4.

**CONTACT PERSON AND
TELEPHONE NUMBER(S):**

DATE OF SUBMISSION:

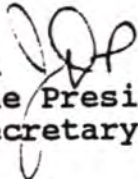
ACTION: _____

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 22, 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR STAFF

FROM: JOHN D. PODESTA 
Assistant to the President
and Staff Secretary

SUBJECT: PAPERFLOW

This memo sets forth the procedure for all White House staff to follow in sending paper to the President for signature or review. It is an initial cut at establishing a smoothly working paper flow system and I expect that it will require some refinement.

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that all paper going to the President should come through the Staff Secretary (with certain exceptions for the NSC). All paper leaving the President's office should go back to the Staff Secretary to ensure that decisions will be implemented, the appropriate people notified, and good records maintained.

Daily Briefing Book

Marcia Hale will be responsible for putting together the President's schedule and informing the appropriate offices what their responsibilities are for producing background memos, talking points, etc. (Full speeches are discussed below.) Marcia will distribute a draft of the next day's schedule at noon. All offices will be responsible for forwarding briefing book materials to my office not later than 4:30 pm the night before the day in question.

My office will review such materials for quality, completeness, etc. and produce the President's book. Briefing books will be distributed by 8:00 pm.

Decision Memo Clearance

Perhaps the most important function of the Staff Secretary's office is to ensure that decision memoranda are properly staffed before reaching the President. That will require cooperation of all staff. The following procedures should be followed:

o Unless a real emergency exists, decision memos must be forwarded to the Staff Secretary at least 48 hours in advance of presenting the document to the President.

o I will route the memo to relevant White House Staff for comment. The Chief of Staff and Vice President will receive all draft decision documents for comment. I will also route such drafts to Bernie Nussbaum and to Maggie Williams. Other offices will be routed as appropriate.

o Routing will be Assistants to the President. It will be up to each Assistant to decide proper routing procedures within his or her own office.

o As a general rule, staffing to Cabinet agencies will be done through the Councils. In the event that comment from Cabinet officers is required that cannot be handled through the regular Council process, paper will be routed through the Cabinet Secretary, who will also serve as a collection point for comments coming back from the Cabinet in those circumstances.

o My office will serve as a collection point for all comments from the White House Staff and in the circumstances described in the above bullet from the Cabinet (via the Cabinet Secretary) and will attempt to facilitate consensus, prior to presentation of the matter to the President. Where no consensus can be formed, I will ensure that individual views are noted and accurately presented.

Background Memos

Briefing papers, where no formal action is requested, will be handled in the same general manner as decision memos. My office will be responsible for preparing or editing summaries of all general briefing papers.

Speeches

Different administrations have handled the speech clearance process differently, with some vesting principal clearance responsibility in the Staff Secretary, and others in the speech writers themselves. We are going to try out a process under which the Communications staff will have primary responsibility for clearing all speeches and statements of the President released to the press, provided that these procedures are followed:

o My office must be on and see the original distribution list of draft speeches to ensure that all offices with a need to review have received a copy.

o Comments to speech writers should be cc'd to me, to ensure that those views have been appropriately considered before forwarding a draft to the President.

o Drafts of speeches to be presented to the President should flow to and from the President through my office, so that they can be properly handled and archived.

Report to Congress

The Administration prepares over 300 reports to Congress each year, as a result of statutory requirements. Many are submitted under the President's signature. They are frequently thick documents and often come to us with short deadlines. We will try to ensure that agencies submit reports in a timely fashion to give White House staff a meaningful chance to review these reports. We will route them for clearance to the appropriate people.

Legislation

Enrolled legislation (passed by both houses) is received and time stamped by the Executive Clerk. OMB has responsibility for interagency review of the legislation. The Staff Secretary's office will handle clearance of the legislation, signing statements and veto messages amongst the White House staff. The same procedures outlined for clearance of decision memos should be followed.

Correspondence

Congressional correspondence as a rule will be reviewed, personally, by the President. Staffing of letters to the Hill will follow the same procedures as outlined for clearance of decision memos. Other correspondence will be routed initially through Marcia Scott, the Acting Director of Messages and Correspondence who is working furiously to bring up our system for answering mail, whether for the President's or First Lady's signature, or for staff signature. A memo laying out the correspondence system will follow shortly.

Sequencing and Timing

It can be anticipated that staff sending paper to my office will frequently feel that the President must see it in the next 10 minutes. Barring real emergencies, that will generally not be possible. I will be working with Nancy Hernreich to develop a system that will make the President's day work for him.

Morning. With regard to paper, my expectation is that the President will have a short time in the morning to review his briefing book and paperwork, including (i) papers and letters he must review and sign; (ii) decision memos, briefing memos and others matters which he can review that morning or hold for evening review; (iii) a summary of documents and important correspondence received, which he can review in more detail if he wishes.

Daytime Period. The President wants to limit review of paper during daytime working hours. Only essential items which must be signed or reviewed, will be brought to his attention during those hours. I will forward essential items to the President through Nancy Hernreich who will be responsible for fitting review of essential items into the day's schedule.

Evening. After the President's morning work period all non-essential paperwork will be held until the evening. In the evening, we will give the President a manageable amount of reading -- no more than 45 minutes to an hour's worth. We will include in these materials all important decision memos which will be discussed the next day.

Weekend. Longer policy papers and think pieces will be held for weekend review, where possible. That will give the President more time to reflect and comment.

Following Week

By the close of business each Friday, senior staff -- and especially the councils -- should forward to me a list of any important decision memos that they expect to have presented to the President the next week so that we can build adequate time into the schedule for review at the staff level and by the President.

Style

Some changes may be made to the current style of documents intended for the President, but, for now, please use current style forms.

In closing, let me say that my office has a straightforward goal -- to protect the President and his decision-making process. Paper coming to him must meet the highest standards of excellence. Papers must be well written. Options must be clearly stated. Those who need to see it must have seen it. Views of advisors must be accurately reflected. Summaries must be brief and accurate. We cannot let the pressure of time compromise those standards.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 13, 1991

MEMO FOR PHIL BRADY

FROM: 
RON GEISLER

SUBJECT: Brief History of the White House Staff Secretary System
Since Roosevelt

The duties of our Staff Secretaries have varied considerably, depending on how the President structures his staff. For instance, in my experience, the Staff Secretaries to Presidents Reagan and Bush have had more policy responsibility outside the normal staffing of presidential papers than did their predecessors in the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, and, from what my two predecessors have told me, in the Eisenhower administration as well.

No staff secretary system, headed by a "Staff Secretary," existed in the Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Under these administrations, several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk were responsible for staffing papers and then submitting them directly to the President for his signature. The first formalized staff secretary system, headed by a Staff Secretary, was established by President Eisenhower, and the system as we know it today began in the Nixon Administration.

Because there was no staff secretary system in place during the administrations of Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, my two predecessors (Bill Hopkins and Tom Jones - 1931-1981) and I are reluctant to provide a comprehensive list of names because there were so many who were responsible for staffing their own papers and then submitting them directly to the President. (It would take a considerable amount of research to compile an accurate list.)

I have prepared the attached list with names and titles of persons who have performed the duties of "Staff Secretary" when the system, as we know it today, existed during an administration. Additionally, on this list are names of persons who would best fit the description of a Staff Secretary if a system had existed. Also, I am providing you with the only book ever written on the history of the White House staff. It is excellent, please return it.

WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY SYSTEM SINCE ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. Because of the way this President structured his staff, it would be very difficult to name an individual who would best fit the description of a staff secretary in this administration. Most of the papers were staffed and submitted directly to the President by the Executive Clerk.

Truman

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. The presidential assistant who would best fit the description of a staff secretary would be Matthew J. Connelly, Secretary to the President.

Eisenhower

The first President to establish a formalized staff secretary system, headed by a staff secretary. The two who held the title of Staff Secretary to the President were Brigadier General Paul T. Carroll, U.S. Army, and Brigadier General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Jr., U.S. Army. (These staff secretaries did not receive a commission of appointment while serving in this capacity.) The Executive Clerk shared an office with these gentlemen and both staffed and submitted papers directly to the President.

Kennedy

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants (more than any other administration) staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. The presidential assistant who would best fit the description of a staff secretary would be P. Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President. The Executive Clerk's papers that required the President's signature were submitted to Mr. O'Donnell, who had to be reminded almost daily that certain papers needed immediate action. The only exception were bills and vetoes, which were submitted directly to the President by Myer Feldman, Counsel to the President.

Johnson

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. Because of the way this President structured his staff, it is difficult to select the presidential assistants who would best fit the description of a staff secretary. However, the best candidates would be W. Marvin Watson and James R. Jones, both Special Assistants to the President.

Nixon

The staff secretary system as we know it today began in this administration. The Executive Clerk's papers that required the President's signature were submitted to the staff secretary and, to date, this procedure is still in place. The presidential assistants who held this position were:

Kenneth R. Cole, Jr., Special Assistant to the President
John R. Brown, III, Staff Assistant (received no commission)
Jon M. Huntsman, Special Assistant to the President
Bruce A. Kehrli, Special Assistant to the President
Jerry H. Jones, Staff Secretary to the President

(NOTE: Mr. Haldeman was a tough taskmaster!)

Ford

Jerry H. Jones, Staff Secretary to the President
James E. Connor, Secretary to the Cabinet and
Staff Secretary to the President

Carter

Richard G. Hutcheson, III, Staff Secretary to the President

Reagan

Richard G. Darman, Assistant to the President and
Deputy to the Chief of Staff
David L. Chew, Staff Secretary and Deputy Assistant
to the President
Rhett B. Dawson, Assistant to the President for Operations

Bush

James W. Cicconi, Assistant to the President and
Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Phillip D. Brady, Assistant to the President and
Staff Secretary

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THE STAFF SECRETARY

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Each afternoon the staff secretary assembles the president's "Daily Book." On top is the schedule for the next day; under tabs or in folders are the briefing papers for every presidential appointment: a speech, a meeting, a taping, a photo session. (The staff's proposed "talking points" for meetings are often specific to a fault. Johnson reportedly required presentation proposals for international conferences to be written in "Texas language" so he could read them aloud; Reagan's staff went so far as to write out first-person wording for him to use at even the most mundane appointments.⁴ On the scene, in person, however, presidents usually escape from the confinements of their cues and extemporize with their own personal warmth.)

Each event's "action officer" has been in charge of all the preparations, both substantive and logistical; the action officer will sit in on most of the Oval Office meetings that are held, to record the decision. "Should sit in"

perhaps, rather than "will." If the practice of leaking is pervasive, this essential staff service will suffer. Former Chief of Staff Donald Regan observed that during his time at the White House, leaks "had achieved such epidemic proportions that the inner circle was afraid to take notes lest they read them next day in the newspapers or hear them broadcast over the networks." He added:

In the past, confidential clerks sat in the Oval Office with notebook in hand, recording the exchanges between Presidents and some of their visitors. This provided a record to support or correct the President's memory of events and an aide-memoire to history. No such record can exist, however, except in conditions of inviolable confidentiality. And no such condition existed or was even imaginable in the White House that I knew.⁵

Finally, the staff secretary is the funnel for papers coming back out of the Oval Office. If a decision is marked or notes scribbled on briefing papers, he scoops up the inscribed documents, notifies those concerned of the chief executive's action, and builds the archival record.

THE OFFICE OF CABINET AFFAIRS

The external coordination circuit is managed in the Office of Cabinet Affairs; it connects with the respective chiefs of staff who are resident in each Cabinet department. Eisenhower began this system, too, in the fall of 1954.⁶

While meetings of the full Cabinet (described in chapter 2) may not always fit a president's style, the Office of Cabinet Affairs is still the primary guarantor that Cabinet members will be consulted on all presidential business (other than the separately handled NSC papers and in the other instances where special secrecy has been mandated). Working in parallel with the staff secretary, the same Cabinet Council papers, option memoranda, and draft speeches are sent by the Office of Cabinet Affairs to the affected departments.

In a "morning briefing" system, each departmental chief of staff is expected to send in a daily note alerting the Office of Cabinet Affairs what the "lead issue" is expected to be in the department that day. "The Department of Justice is the worst," commented one Cabinet affairs official, who must therefore scout behind the "nothing to report" notices with telephone calls to ferret out what otherwise might take the White House by

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 13, 1991

MEMO FOR PHIL BRADY

FROM:

Ron Geisler
RON GEISLER

SUBJECT: Brief History of the White House Staff Secretary System
Since Roosevelt

The duties of our Staff Secretaries have varied considerably, depending on how the President structures his staff. For instance, in my experience, the Staff Secretaries to Presidents Reagan and Bush have had more policy responsibility outside the normal staffing of presidential papers than did their predecessors in the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations, and, from what my two predecessors have told me, in the Eisenhower administration as well.

No staff secretary system, headed by a "Staff Secretary," existed in the Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Under these administrations, several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk were responsible for staffing papers and then submitting them directly to the President for his signature. The first formalized staff secretary system, headed by a Staff Secretary, was established by President Eisenhower, and the system as we know it today began in the Nixon Administration.

Because there was no staff secretary system in place during the administrations of Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, my two predecessors (Bill Hopkins and Tom Jones - 1931-1981) and I are reluctant to provide a comprehensive list of names because there were so many who were responsible for staffing their own papers and then submitting them directly to the President. (It would take a considerable amount of research to compile an accurate list.)

I have prepared the attached list with names and titles of persons who have performed the duties of "Staff Secretary" when the system, as we know it today, existed during an administration. Additionally, on this list are names of persons who would best fit the description of a Staff Secretary if a system had existed. Also, I am providing you with the only book ever written on the history of the White House staff. It is excellent, please return it.

WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY SYSTEM SINCE ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. Because of the way this President structured his staff, it would be very difficult to name an individual who would best fit the description of a staff secretary in this administration. Most of the papers were staffed and submitted directly to the President by the Executive Clerk.

Truman

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. The presidential assistant who would best fit the description of a staff secretary would be Matthew J. Connelly, Secretary to the President.

Eisenhower

The first President to establish a formalized staff secretary system, headed by a staff secretary. The two who held the title of Staff Secretary to the President were Brigadier General Paul T. Carroll, U.S. Army, and Brigadier General Andrew J. Goodpaster, Jr., U.S. Army. (These staff secretaries did not receive a commission of appointment while serving in this capacity.) The Executive Clerk shared an office with these gentlemen and both staffed and submitted papers directly to the President.

Kennedy

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants (more than any other administration) staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. The presidential assistant who would best fit the description of a staff secretary would be P. Kenneth O'Donnell, Special Assistant to the President. The Executive Clerk's papers that required the President's signature were submitted to Mr. O'Donnell, who had to be reminded almost daily that certain papers needed immediate action. The only exception were bills and vetoes, which were submitted directly to the President by Myer Feldman, Counsel to the President.

Johnson

No staff secretary system existed. Several presidential assistants and the Executive Clerk staffed and submitted their papers directly to the President. Because of the way this President structured his staff, it is difficult to select the presidential assistants who would best fit the description of a staff secretary. However, the best candidates would be W. Marvin Watson and James R. Jones, both Special Assistants to the President.

Nixon

The staff secretary system as we know it today began in this administration. The Executive Clerk's papers that required the President's signature were submitted to the staff secretary and, to date, this procedure is still in place. The presidential assistants who held this position were:

Kenneth R. Cole, Jr., Special Assistant to the President
John R. Brown, III, Staff Assistant (received no commission)
Jon M. Huntsman, Special Assistant to the President
Bruce A. Kehrli, Special Assistant to the President
Jerry H. Jones, Staff Secretary to the President

(NOTE: Mr. Haldeman was a tough taskmaster!)

Ford

Jerry H. Jones, Staff Secretary to the President
James E. Connor, Secretary to the Cabinet and
Staff Secretary to the President

Carter

Richard G. Hutcheson, III, Staff Secretary to the President

Reagan

Richard G. Darman, Assistant to the President and
Deputy to the Chief of Staff
David L. Chew, Staff Secretary and Deputy Assistant
to the President
Rhett B. Dawson, Assistant to the President for Operations

Bush

James W. Cicconi, Assistant to the President and
Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Phillip D. Brady, Assistant to the President and
Staff Secretary