



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer's Briefing Materials Stephanie Cutter Interview, 11/10/2009

Robert A. Martin, Research Director

Miller Center Documents¹

- Stephanie Cutter Timeline.
- Stephanie Cutter Fact Sheet.

Secondary Source Materials

- Stephanie Cutter bio, <http://www.harvard.edu>.
- Robert Shrum, *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007) pp. 410-411, 465-466.
- Mark Leibovich and Jim VandeHei, "New Blood at Heart of Kerry Campaign; Some See Changes as a Last Chance," *The Washington Post*, 9/17/2004.
- Evan Thomas, "The Vets Attacks," *Newsweek*, 11/15/2004.
- Gayle Fee and Laura Raposa, "Inside Track: Kerry Aide Blamed for Campaign Stumbles," *Boston Herald*, 12/07/2004.
- Jeff Zeleny, "Stephanie Cutter," *The New York Times*, 11/21/2008.
- "Where There's Smoke," *The Hotline*, 5/18/2009.

Oral History Interviews

- Mary Beth Cahill interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 3/24/2009.
- Sharon Waxman interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 5/11/2009.
- Thomas Oliphant interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 3/14/2007.

¹ These are original documents created by Miller Center researchers for the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project. Please acknowledge credit for any use of these materials.

STEPHANIE CUTTER TIMELINE

Prepared by Bryan Craig; revised by Janet E. Heininger, 11/7/09

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/2/2009

- 1992** Cutter campaigns for William Clinton as an advance person. (*National Journal*, 03/18/2006; http://www.whorun.gov.com/Profiles/Stephanie_Cutter)
- 1993**
- Jan.-May* Cutter is a legal intern for Hillary Rodham Clinton's White House Health Care Task Force. EMK publicly supports Clinton's decision to scrap the national health care plan the administration's transition team had been working on. EMK had hoped that the Clinton team would adopt the Senate Democrat's "play or pay" approach. EMK and his staff are granted access to the Clinton health insurance task force and press the White House on the need to move quickly on health care reform. However, by May, the task force disbands after failing to meet its deadline. (*National Journal*, 01/01/2001; *The Washington Post*, 04/06/1993)
- 1993-2000** Cutter works her way up the Clinton Administration to become Associate Administrator for Communications at the EPA and deputy communications director. In 1997, she graduates from Georgetown Law School. (http://www.whorun.gov.com/Profiles/Stephanie_Cutter)
- 2001** Important issues EMK works on in 2001 include No Child Left Behind, opposition to the Bush judicial nominations and the Ashcroft attorney general nomination, Uniting and Strengthening America Act, Immigration Reform/INS reorganization, military tribunals and indefinite detentions and Robert F. Kennedy Department of Justice.
- May* The Democrats regain control of the Senate when Jeffords leaves the Republican Party to caucus with the Democrats as an Independent. EMK regains chairmanship of the HELP Committee, as well as the Judiciary's Immigration and Refugee Affairs Subcommittee.
- July* Cutter is named to EMK's staff as Communications Director. She replaces Will Keyser. (*The Boston Globe*, 07/10/2001)
- September* 9/11 terrorist attacks. EMK is meeting with First Lady Laura Bush at the time to discuss education. The Secret Service escort the First Lady out of the Senate building sometime after the second plane crashes into the second tower.
- 2002** Important issues EMK works on in 2002 include opposition to the Bush judicial nominations, Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act, Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act, extension of Section 245(i) of immigration law, Prison Rape Reduction Act and the Department of Homeland Security.

November Cutter says that EMK “hasn’t taken a position [on whom he’ll support in 2004] because there are no presidential candidates yet.” At roughly the same time, Senator John Kerry (D-MA) appears on ABC’s “This Week” and says that he will not make any announcement about his candidacy until he could “sit with my senior colleague, who is a wise voice in American politics.” (*The Boston Globe*, 01/22/2003)

The Republicans regain control of the Senate in the midterm elections, returning to the GOP control of the House, Senate, and White House. EMK loses chairmanship of the HELP Committee.

2003 Important issues EMK works on in 2003 include Head Start bill, opposition to the Bush judicial nominations (including amending the Senate rules and the “nuclear option”), submitting brief in SCOTUS affirmative action case, opposition to medical malpractice reform, Amber Alert Bill, Military Naturalization Bill, and renewal of Undetectable Firearms Act.

January EMK’s daughter, Kara Kennedy, is treated for lung cancer.

July EMK reportedly urges Cutter to become Communications Director for the Democratic National Convention. (<http://www.whorunsgov.com>)

November Kerry hires Mary Beth Cahill, chief of staff to EMK, to manage his presidential campaign. Cahill is close to Bob Shrum, another EMK former staffer. Cutter also joins the campaign as communications director. Three other EMK campaign veterans, pollster Tom Kiley and Shrum business partners Michael Donilon and Tad Devine, are also top Kerry campaign advisers. (*The New York Times*, 11/11/2003; *The Boston Globe*, 01/20/2004)

2004

Jan.-Feb. EMK campaigns for Kerry in Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, Illinois, Arizona, New Mexico and Wisconsin. (Robert Shrum, *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007, pp. 424; *The Financial Times*, 02/07/2004; *The Boston Globe*, 02/18/2004)

April An article in *Slate* compares the various Kerry campaign factions to the warring tribal landlords of Afghanistan. The two factions with the deepest contempt for each other are identified as the “Kennedy Militia,” which includes Shrum, Cahill, and Cutter, and the “Clintonites,” which include campaign policy director Sarah Bianchi, economics advisers Gene Sperling and Roger Altman, and former Clinton policy director Bruce Reed. (*Slate*, 04/15/2004)

July EMK successfully works to bring the 2004 Democratic National Convention to Boston. Kerry is nominated as the Democratic presidential nominee.

On the 27th, EMK addresses the Democratic National Convention and is particularly critical of the Bush Administration. EMK reportedly is eager for enhanced media coverage to focus on his opposition to the Iraq war, but has also crafted a more fiery speech in order to allow delegates to vent their anti-administration sentiment before the Kerry and Edwards acceptance speeches. (*The Boston Globe*, 07/28/2004)

Also on the 27th, a star-studded tribute to EMK is held at Boston's Symphony Hall. Cutter says that the Kerry campaign has no concerns about EMK being honored during the convention, pointing out his instrumental role in bringing the convention to Boston. (*The Boston Globe*, 04/13/2004, 07/24/2004)

November Bush defeats Kerry in the presidential election.

A *Newsweek* article comes out reporting that Kerry was unhappy with Shrum, Cahill and Cutter, specifically about not going on the offensive quickly enough against the Swift Boat ads. Kerry's aides call the article unfair. (*Newsweek*, 11/15/2004; *The Washington Post*, 11/15/2004)

2005 Important issues EMK works on in 2005 include the Higher Education Act, opposition to Bush judicial nominations, including John Roberts for Chief Justice and the Alberto Gonzalez nomination as Attorney General, opposition to bankruptcy reform, opposition to the "nuclear option," opposition to class action reform, asbestos legislation, increase in the H-2B visa cap, opposition to Patriot Act reauthorization, funding for off-site judicial security, Kennedy-McCain comprehensive immigration reform, opposition to liability protections for gun manufacturers and the tobacco settlement.

January Cutter begins simultaneously to serve as a Senior Communications Adviser to EMK and Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) from January 2005 - March 2006. According to Cutter's current Harvard bio, "In this dual role, Cutter developed a message and communications strategy for Senate Democratic leadership and managed caucus-wide strategic campaigns in lead up to 2006 elections. Cutter also created and implemented caucus message strategy for State of the Union, the FY 2006 budget and consideration of the President's Supreme Court nominees, and helped devise a rapid response system for Members of Congress, national Democrats and advocacy groups to promote message unity in the fight to regain majority in Congress." (http://www.iop.harvard.edu/Programs/Fellows-Study-Groups/Current-Fellows/Stephanie_Cutter) It is not clear whether Cutter is officially serving on EMK's staff at this time. According to the 2005 *Congressional Yellow Book*, Laura Capps serves as EMK's Communications Director and Melissa Wagoner serves as EMK's press secretary in 2005. (*The Boston Herald*, 12/07/2004; *National Review*, 12/07/2004; *The Washington Post*, 01/19/2005, 05/04/2006)

2006 Important issues EMK works on in 2006 include confirmation of Associate Justice Samuel Alito, Senate passage of the EMK-McCain immigration reform, VRA extension, an attempt to create a national sex registry, mine safety, renewal of the Older Americans Act, increasing the minimum wage, Iraq and the FY2007 Defense Appropriations bill, opposition to a ban on same-sex marriage, opposition to student loan reductions and visits to Italy and London.

January The Senate confirms the Alito nomination 58-42, with EMK voting against.

March Cutter forms the Cutter Media Group, a media consultancy company. She continues to advise EMK on communication issues. She is continuously referred to in the press as a Kennedy spokeswoman in 2006 and 2007, as well as a Democratic strategist. (*National Review*, 03/18/2006; *The Washington Post*, 05/04/2006)

May EMK travels to Stormont as part of a special Presidential delegation to witness the opening of the new, power-sharing government.

November The Democrats regain control of the House and Senate. EMK regains chairmanship of the HELP Committee.

2007 Important issues EMK works on in 2007 are the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, attempting to revive immigration legislation, supporting a timeline for troop withdrawal in Iraq, job training programs, Protecting America's Workers Act (PAWA), Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) and increasing the minimum wage.

January EMK gives a speech at the National Press Club in which he calls on Congress to act to prevent an escalation of the Iraq war. Bush announces a "surge" in troop levels later in the month.

2008

January EMK announces his support for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.

May EMK collapses at his home in Hyannisport. Cutter, who is identified in the press as a Kennedy spokesperson, says that EMK is "conscious, talking, joking with family." (*Associated Press*, 5/17/2008) EMK is subsequently diagnosed with a brain tumor.

June Cutter becomes Michelle Obama's chief of staff and a senior adviser to the Obama presidential campaign. (*The New York Times*, 06/17/2008)

August EMK makes a surprise appearance and speech at the Democratic National Convention.

November Obama wins the presidential election. Cutter becomes Chief Spokesperson for the Obama-Biden Transition Team. (*New York Times*, 11/08/2008)

2009

January Cutter becomes Communications Director for the U.S. Department of Treasury. Timothy Geithner has already been named Treasury Secretary.

EMK steps down from his seat on the Judiciary Committee to focus on health care reform.

May Cutter is detailed to the White House to coordinate the Senate confirmation hearings to replace Supreme Court Justice David Souter. Cutter is named Adviser to the President. Obama nominates Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. (*The New York Times*, 5/19/2009)

August Sotomayor wins confirmation to the Supreme Court, 68-31, on the 6th.

Fall Cutter leaves the Obama Administration and is named Resident Fellow at Harvard University's Institute of Politics.

STEPHANIE CUTTER FACT SHEET

Prepared by Rob Martin and Bryan Craig

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/2/2009

Positions w/ EMK:

- **Jan. 2005 - June 2008:** Senior Communications Adviser (from Jan 05-March 06, Cutter simultaneously served as adviser to both EMK and Democratic Minority Leader Harry Reid) *Note: it's not clear if Cutter was formally on EMK's staff during this time; press reports suggest she was on both EMK's and Reid's staffs in 05-06, and then continued to serve as an outside consultant to EMK in 07-08 through Cutter Media Group)*
- **July 2001 – 2003:** Communications Director

Other positions:

- **Fall 2009 - present:** Resident fellow at Harvard University's Institute of Politics
- **May-Aug. 2009:** Advisor to President Obama (responsible for coordinating the Sotomayor Supreme Court confirmation hearings)
- **Jan.-May 2009:** Communications Director for Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner
- **Nov. 2008 – Jan. 2009:** Chief Spokesperson for the Obama-Biden Transition Team
- **June - Nov. 2008:** chief of staff to Michelle Obama for the 2008 presidential campaign
- **March 2006 – June 2008:** Head of Cutter Media Group
- **2005-2006:** Senior Communications Adviser to Senator Harry Reid (D-NV)
- **Nov. 2003-2004:** Campaign spokeswoman for the Kerry presidential campaign
- **July – Nov. 2003:** Communications Director for Democratic National Convention
- **Jan. – July 2001:** Senior V.P. of PR firm Robinson, Lerer and Montgomery LLC
- **1993- 2000:** various positions (legal intern for Clinton White House health care task force, Associate Administrator for Communications at U.S. EPA, and White House Deputy Communications Director)

Possible topics:

- Clinton Healthcare Task Force and subsequent Clinton legislation
- Post-9/11 legislation: ie. immigration reform, counter-terrorism/civil liberties issues
- Edwards-Kennedy-McCain Patients Bill of Rights
- No Child Left Behind and subsequent funding issues
- Losing the Senate in the 2002 midterm elections; EMK loses HELP chairmanship
- Kara Kennedy's lung cancer in 2002/2003
- Bringing the 2004 Democratic National Convention to Boston (while serving as communications director for the convention)
- 2004 Kerry campaign (while serving as campaign spokesperson)
- Bush judicial nominations, including Roberts, Alito, and the "nuclear option"
- Democrats retake Senate in 2006 midterm elections; EMK regains HELP chairmanship
- Kennedy-McCain immigration reform
- 2008 campaign (supporting Obama over Clinton; joining Michelle Obama's staff)
- EMK's brain tumor (she handled communications strategy on his battle with cancer)
- Obama Administration: work on transition, at Treasury and on Sotomayor nomination