

U.S. ELECTIONS



NEWSLETTER 2009

U.S. EMBASSY HELSINKI

AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER

JANUARY 2009

BARACK OBAMA MR. PRESIDENT



Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States of America and the nation's first African-American president on Tuesday, 20th of January 2009.

Millions of people packed the Mall early Tuesday to watch Obama's inauguration and later hit the parade route to catch a glimpse of the new president. For many, the inauguration was the realization of a dream they never thought could be fulfilled.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Roberts administered the oath

of office to Obama on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. "I will faithfully execute the office of the president of the United States," Obama said as he placed his hand on the Bible last used to inaugurate President Abraham Lincoln in 1861.

"This is America happening," said Evadey Minott of Brooklyn, New York. "It was prophesied by [the Rev. Martin Luther] King that we would have a day when everyone would come together. This is that day. I am excited. I am joyful. It brings tears to my eyes."

“

My fellow citizens:

I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebearers, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

Transcript: <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/01/20/obama.politics/index.html>

The Inauguration

THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA WAS CELEBRATED AT THE AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER



THE INAUGURATION OF President Barack Obama was celebrated at the American Resource Center on January 21. The ARC arranged an event including a viewing of the inaugural speech and a live Digital Video Conference from Washington, D.C. The evening was hosted by Counselor for Cultural Affairs Nicole Conn from the U.S. Embassy Helsinki. Political Consultant Gary Nordlinger gave a presentation via a digital video con-

ference analyzing the key themes of the speech and the current political situation. After the presentation Mr. Nordlinger answered questions from a large and active audience. The event was a follow-up to the election panel discussion event arranged at the ARC on November 5, 2008, this time addressing issues important to the new Obama – Biden administration.



Approximately 2 million attended to Obama's Inauguration ceremony in Washington D.C.

THE 44TH PRESIDENT INAUGURATION AT THE US EMBASSY, HELSINKI

CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES MICHAEL Butler hosted an inauguration watch at the U.S. Embassy on January 20 for Finland's political, business, cultural and military leaders. For a special highlight, former Finnish president and 2008 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Martti Ahtisaari raised a toast to newly sworn-in U.S. President Barack Obama. A Finnish television network aired live coverage from the celebration, interviewing a leading Finnish expert on the United States, Helsinki University Professor Markku Henriksson, and Labor Minister Tarja Cronberg, among others. Finland's public broadcasting company, YLE, broadcast the inauguration events live with simultaneous Finnish subtitles and translation.



Chargé Michael Butler and former Finnish president and 2008 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Martti Ahtisaari raising a toast to newly sworn-in U.S. President Barack Obama at an event at the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki.

Passing the Baton

MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

PASSING THE BATON 2009 was a one-day conference convened by the United States Institute of Peace to examine critical foreign policy challenges and opportunities facing the Obama administration as it transitions into power. It took place January 8, 2009 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

Passing the Baton 2009 was a reprise of an event by the same name that USIP sponsored in January 2001 as the country made the transition from the Clinton to the Bush administration. Today, the United States is in another leadership transition, but in significantly changed – and evermore challenging – international and domestic circumstances.

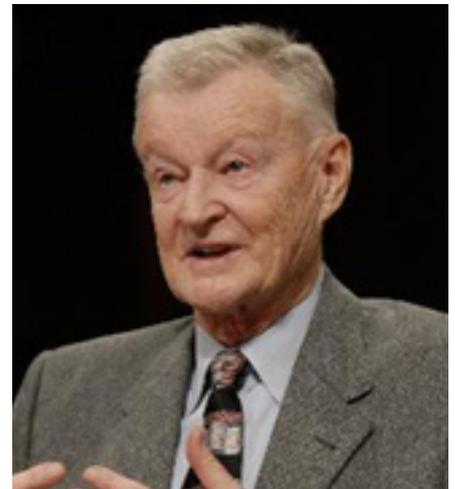
In 2001 the United States saw itself as part of a post-Cold War world. Today the United States finds itself in a post-9/11 world rather than a post-Cold War world. The United States has spent the last eight years dealing with catastrophic terrorism perpetrated by non-state organizations, trying to prevent mass atrocities in weak and failed states, and confronting the heightened challenge of countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the failure of peace processes, and the burdens of stabilizing and reconstructing societies.

Find more from United States Institute of Peace Passing the Baton Conference:
<http://www.usip.org/baton2009/index.html>

IN NOVEMBER 2008, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, also took the challenge to frame the major foreign policy challenges facing the new president. His Whitehead Lecture at the Chatham House can be listened to via Youtube, or an edited version of the speech can be found as an article (in a pdf file) on the Chatham House website.

“THE RESULTING INTERNATIONAL challenge that now confronts the new US President is compounded in its complexity by the fact that it is occurring in the context of two simultaneous, and interacting, transformational developments on the world political scene.

The first concerns the emergence of global issues pertaining to human wellbeing as critical worldwide political concerns—issues such as climate, environment, starvation, health and social inequality. These issues are becoming more contentious because they have come to the fore in the context of what I have described in my writings as ‘the global political awakening’, itself a truly transformative event on the global scene. For the first time in human history almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious and politically interactive. There are only a few pockets of humanity left in the remotest corners of the world that are not politically alert and engaged with the political turmoil and stirrings that are so widespread today around the world.



Zbigniew Brzezinski

The resulting global political activism is generating a surge in the quest for personal dignity, cultural respect and economic opportunity in a world painfully scarred by memories of centuries-long alien colonial or imperial domination.

The second pertains to yet another fundamental change: a shift in the distribution of global power from the West to the East. The 500-year-long domination of the world by the Atlantic powers—Portugal, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Britain and, more recently, the United States—is coming to an end with the new political and global pre-eminence of both China and Japan (the latter already the number two economic power in the world). Waiting in the wings are India and perhaps a recovered Russia.”

Read rest of Zbigniew Brzezinski's ideas:

http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/13106_85_1brzezinski.pdf

Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mt7swlV4VuA>

New Cabinet

SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON



SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON was selected by President-elect Barack Obama to be the 67th secretary of state on December 1, 2008. Clinton has been a senator from New York since 2001 and was previously first lady of the United States from 1993 to 2001. Prior to public service, she worked as a lawyer and with her husband Bill Clinton in his campaigns for president and governor of Arkansas.

Mission: Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty and act responsibly within the international system.

History: Established by an act of Congress in 1789, the department is the lead institution for American diplomacy. Six secretaries of state — Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren and James Buchanan — went on to serve as U.S. president.

SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY TIMOTHY F. GEITHNER



TIMOTHY F. GEITHNER was nominated by President-elect Barack Obama to be the 75th secretary of the treasury. Before his nomination, Geithner was the head of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He also served as assistant secretary of the treasury for international affairs during the Clinton administration from 1998 to 2001.

Mission: Serve the American people and strengthen national security by managing the U.S. government's finances effectively, promoting economic growth and stability, and ensuring the safety, soundness and security of the U.S. and international financial systems.

History: The secretary of the treasury is one of the original Cabinet-level posts. Famous secretaries of the treasury include Alexander Hamilton, whose image appears on the \$10 bill, and millionaire industrialist Andrew Mellon.

International engagement: The Treasury's Office of Economic Policy reports on current international and domestic economic developments and helps draft responses to events in the financial markets.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT GATES



ROBERT M. GATES was sworn in on December 18, 2006, as the 22nd secretary of defense and was asked by President-elect Barack Obama to continue his service on December 1. Before entering his present post, Secretary Gates was the president of Texas A&M University, the nation's seventh largest university. He also has served as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency and was a member of the National Security Council.

Mission: To provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of the United States.

History: The department is the United States' oldest and largest government agency, with its roots dating back to before the nation won its independence. Called the Department of War until 1949, it was among the original Cabinet departments.

Fun fact: The Pentagon, the headquarters of the Department of Defense, has three times the floor space of the Empire State Building in New York.

New Cabinet

SECRETARY OF ENERGY STEVEN CHU



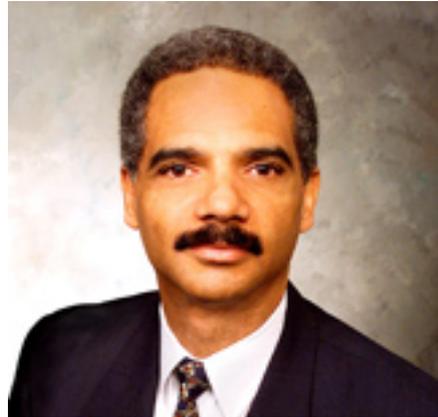
STEVEN CHU WAS selected by President Barack Obama December 15 to be the next secretary of the Department of Energy. Chu is currently the head of the Berkeley National Laboratory and is a specialist in carbon-neutral energy sources. He also won the 1997 Nobel Prize in physics.

Mission: To advance the national, economic and energy security of the United States; to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission; and to ensure the environmental cleanup of the national nuclear weapons complex.

International engagement: The department's Office of Policy and International Affairs advises the department's leadership on international energy initiatives, and its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy works to create partnerships on efficient and renewable energy policies with international organizations. In addition, the Office of Fossil Energy has partnerships with 17 countries to promote and develop fossil fuel technologies.

History: Created in 1977.

ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER (DESIGNATE)



ERIC HIMPTON HOLDER JR. was nominated by President Barack Obama December 1 to be the 82nd U.S. attorney general. Holder served as deputy attorney general from 1997 to 2001 during the Clinton administration, and previously served as the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

Mission: To enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

History: The Office of the Attorney General was created by the Judiciary Act of 1789 as one of the original Cabinet posts, but was intended to be a one-person, part-time position. As the workload increased, the number of assistants grew and much work was contracted to private attorneys. In 1870, Congress established the Department of Justice.

WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF - RAHM EMANUEL



RAHM EMANUEL, WHOSE selection was announced November 6, 2008, was the first appointment made to the Obama administration. "I announce this appointment first because the chief of staff is central to the ability of a president and administration to accomplish an agenda," President-elect Obama said in announcing the appointment. Emanuel, a Chicago native, served as a senior adviser to President Bill Clinton and represented the Illinois 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives 2002-2008.

History: The position, which is filled at the discretion of the president, was first established by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and, for a time, Jimmy Carter opted not to have a chief of staff.

More information on new Cabinet members and for the rest of the cabinet can be found at [America.gov](http://www.americagov.com).

<http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/cabinet.html>

New Congress

THE 111TH CONGRESS BEGINS WITH TWO EMPTY SEATS

WHEN THE 111TH Congress began January 6, two men who hope to be their states' new senators were absent.

The U.S. Constitution mandates that a new Congress convene at noon on January 3 in each odd-numbered year, unless the previous Congress passes a law designating a different date. The last Congress designated January 6 for this Congress.

Much of the day was spent taking care of routine business. Nancy Pelosi was easily re-elected as speaker of the House and then administered the oath of office to all members of the House of Representatives.

All newly elected members of the Senate, including those who just won re-election, took an oath of office administered by Vice President Cheney. The U.S. vice president serves as president of the Senate.

The 111th Senate began

with empty seats from Illinois and Minnesota. While vacancies are common in the U.S. Congress, the circumstances surrounding these were unusual.

Soon after Barack Obama won the presidency, he resigned his Senate seat. Illinois state law requires the state governor, Rod Blagojevich in this case, to appoint a successor. The successor would have to run for re-election in the next general election, which is in November 2010.

Blagojevich, who is currently under investigation for allegations of corruption, has appointed former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris to the Senate seat. Blagojevich has been accused of trying to solicit bribes for the Senate appointment, but there is no evidence that Burris was involved in such an incident.

Senate rules require an incoming senator to present a certification from their secretary of state. When Burris arrived at the Capitol without the document, the secretary of the Senate informed him he would not be accepted. The secre-

tary of the Senate oversees many of the legislative body's administrative functions.

The Senate also opted not to seat Minnesota's Al Franken, who Minnesota election officials believe won the state's extremely close contest. A recently concluded weeks-long hand recount of 2.9 million ballots found the comedian-turned-politician won by about 225 votes. Republican incumbent Norm Coleman has filed a lawsuit challenging the state's finding. The initial Election Day count had found Coleman ahead by about 200 votes. Minnesota law prevents the state from certifying the results during Coleman's lawsuit.

"We understand the sensitivity on both sides to an election this close," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said. He said he hopes Coleman will concede and Franken can be certified as the state's winner soon.

There is currently one vacancy in the House, as Illinois Congressman Rahm Emanuel recently resigned his seat to become Obama's White House chief of staff. There will be other vacancies as well — Joe Biden has resigned his Senate seat when he became vice president and members of both Houses will leave to serve in Obama's Cabinet.



Full list of Representatives:

House: http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW_by_State.shtml

Senate: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Secrets of the White House

HERE'S A LOOK AT SOME OF THE SELDOM-SEEN STUFF THAT AWAITS THE NEW PRESIDENT AND HIS FAMILY.

The President of the United States is by far not the only job that comes with a free housing, however, no job approaches the perks given to the president. Harry Truman and Bill Clinton have joked that the White House is the "crown jewel of the federal penal system." The presidency can definitely be an isolating experience for some, but for most of those who become president it is a pleasant ride, despite its burdens. Even President Clinton said as his eight years in the office neared an end; "Even the bad days are good days."

Below are some of the things that make up life in the White House:

Dinner choices: Five chefs operate out of a kitchen on the ground floor of the residence. The executive chef confers with the First Lady about daily menus for the First Family, which is billed for the groceries used in preparing their meals. For mid-night snacks, the First Family has its own kitchen adjacent to the dining room in the living quarters.

Movie Choices: We're not just talking DVDs. There's a 40-seat family theater on the ground floor of the East Wing, and the Motion Picture Association of America provides the latest releases.

Recreation: There are plenty of options, indoors and outdoors. As president, Barack Obama won't have to make a daily morning drive to the gym as he's been doing in



Chicago as president-elect. There's a workout room on the third floor of the White House residence with free weights, and an elliptical machine, and a treadmill. As a former high-school and college basketball player, Obama will find an outdoor hoop behind some bushes and trees a short walk from the Oval Office. Also on the grounds:

Swimming pool: Thank Gerald Ford for the outdoor pool and cabana built in 1975. The water is heated in part by solar cells. The Clintons added a hot tub. And adjacent to the pool patio, there's a horseshoe pit installed by the first President Bush.

Tennis court: It's outdoors on the far end of the South Lawn. There's a sign on the court gate reminding players they must wear white-soled tennis shoes.

Jogging track: A \$30,000 jogging track used to cover the quarter of a mile around the South Lawn. It was installed in 1993 with private donations at the behest of Clinton, who grew weary of tying up traffic when he went for a run on the Mall.

Bowling and billiards: There's a single-lane bowling alley in the basement of the residence. It's got computerized scoring and a

selection of shoes and balls for visitors. Harry Truman brought bowling to the White House in 1947. And there's a game room on the third floor with a full-size pool table.

Air Force One and Marine One:

It's the finest fleet of executive aircraft in the world. Best known are two Boeing 747s that serve as Air Force One. But any aircraft in the fleet, which includes 757s and Gulfstream IIIs, gets that call sign when the President is on board. Even the cavernous C-17 cargo plane has served as Air Force One.

The HMX-1 unit based at Quantico operates the helicopters that serve as Marine One. But the fleet of more than 30 choppers is aging; some have been in service for three decades.

Camp David: "Of all the things about presidency, we will miss Camp David the most." That was Ronald Reagan talking shortly before his second terms in the White House came to an end. Camp David is 143 acres with luxurious cabins set in secluded woods. Although it's far from any body of water, Camp David is a US Navy facility where Marines provide security.

Abridged from The Washingtonian, January 2009, article.

The First 100 Days in Office

THE FIRST 100 days of the Presidency of Barack Obama will begin following his inauguration on January 20, 2009. President Obama's one-hundredth day in power will be on April 29th. The first hundred days of the presidency are important, because during that time presidents are highly scrutinized and will attempt to execute several closely watched plans. It wasn't until Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933 that people started to pay attention to the first 100 days, and he set a pace that few would later match.



For Obama, the first days are perhaps even more important than they usually have been in the past. Obama's election campaign focused on a platform of "Change" and he made several highly anticipated and publicized promises in connection with that theme.

Find more information about Barack Obama's first 100 days in office via America.gov's blog.

<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/>

AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER

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(Reference services: Mon-Fri 9-17)

Summer Hours: Mon-Fri 9-18, Sat
9-16 (Closed Saturdays in July)

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The ARC serves the academic world, media, government officials and non-governmental organizations, research institutions, teachers and students, and individuals interested in the United States.

The ARC is operated jointly by the American Embassy in Helsinki and the National Library of Finland.

E-JOURNALS AND BOOKS

THE UNITED STATES Department of State has a wide selection of Books and E-journals freely available through America.gov website. Below are links to some that are related to recent elections and Barack Obama.

Barack Obama: 44th President of the United States

<http://www.america.gov/publications/books.html#obama>

Obama in His Own Words

http://www.america.gov/publications/books.html#obama_speech

The 2009 U.S. Presidential Inauguration

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#inaug09>

U.S. Presidential Transitions

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#transition>