

Does the President's Staff Just Sit Around and Lie To Him All Day Long? White House: Fire Some People!

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(First published on USA Today comments then removed)

So They said "hey, Go stand in front of Solyndra and Fisker" even though the staff had already written each other on government and personal emails that the train was already coming off the rails on those companies, and 20 others, BEFORE THEY LET HIM DO THAT.

They told him to say that "there would be millions of electric cars" on the road in a couple years (Because Silicon Valley VC's paid McKinsey to write White House reports saying so) and the DOE loan program was a huge win even though the staff had written in government and personal emails, to each other, that it was all going down the tubes BEFORE THEY LET HIM DO THAT.

For Benghazi they told him it was a spontaneous street riot over a badly edited youtube yet 60 Minutes and all major news networks are reporting that it was a well planned A.Q. attack that staff had warned about for weeks. HIS STAFF HAVE NOW SAID ON TV THEY KNEW THE REAL STORY AND LET HIM TELL THE YOUTUBE STORY.

Just a few blocks from the White House, the entire Department of Energy was operating as a cesspool of organized crime and kickbacks under Steven Chu. Over 18 outside agency reviews were confirming this fact to White House staff as early as 2008 in internal reports which White House Staff discussed with each other in their emails yet NOBODY TOLD THE PRESIDENT? REALLY?

Over 20 White House staff have now come forward in blogs, tweets, interviews and reports saying that Obama is manipulated by the people around him and that he is "kept in a bubble". Mr. Joseph was not the only complainer. Even though Joseph will now probably get droned, character attacked and generally killed, many blogs have already acquired an archive of all of his posts from all of his many accounts. He, and many others, show a hopeful outlook in the beginning of their writings and a "how could they be so messed up" perspective once they have actually worked in the West Wing. Martin Sheen- Save Us! DOJ: If you are going to haul Joseph in for using his Freedom Of Speech to disclose negligence then you need to haul some of the West Wing staff in for hiding things from the President too.

Bill Daley's staff have said that Daley and Rahm Emanuel controlled what the President got to see, or didn't get to see. But who controlled Daley and Emanuel? Who, actually, ARE "the two masters we cannot serve at once?" (Per the Debt Ceiling vote outburst)

Now, almost the entire staff of the healthcare agency have said they knew the software was broken ages ago but they never told the President that his most favorite thing was DOA!!!! This was his baby. His most precious glory. His legacy. Nobody mentioned that it was screwed way before it was due. Software is a known thing. You KNOW if it is broken on the daily QA studies. CGI Federal Hired Onsite and a bunch of others who do this, poorly, but all the time. Read www.glassdoor.com about CGI Federal. You can see there that CGI just calls up any freelancer they can find and throws them at a contract. It was an outsource of an outsource of a fired contractor who blew the Canadian healthcare build a long time ago. Nobody knew this? Did anybody tell Obama that the head of the California Obamacare software segment (The main showcase for the system): James Brown Jr. was ARRESTED for FELONY CORRUPTION in the middle of building the Obamacare software? Does he say he knew about that or is that a shock when he reads this on his Kindle right now? That happened BEFORE the roll-out, wouldn't that be kind of, you know: A bad sign?

Who VETS these people?

Tesla would not have passed the vetting at the time they applied for the DOE loan. Neither would Fisker or Solyndra. Tesla was technically bankrupt, had non-existent engineering and the worst debt-ratio on Earth. Tesla might appear OK now (they aren't) but you can make a worm look like a dragon if you give the worm 600 million of our tax dollars and rig the stock market. These staffers and these companies get waived through. By Who?

Who VETS these people and Money Give Aways?

Who?

People can say this or that but when history and indisputable facts show that one thing was happening while, at the same time, behind the scenes, an entirely darker reality was underway and charging towards a failure point that people absolutely knew about ahead of time, you just have to wonder.

DA- LAT

So what are the options here: Illuminati? Massive incompetence? Obama was used? This is just like Microsoft. When something gets too big, it always fails.

Don Westin

Clean house Obama. Like get rid of everybody. Start fresh.

SGH

Tomorrow morning they should hire NETFLIX to come in and get it done. NETFLIX knows how to serve millions of people, deal with surges in demand and scale servers. People build websites in a few hours. People point those websites, built in a few hours, to Amazon Cloud, MS Cloud or other server arrays and they don't choke, they don't go down, they don't have latency issues. It almost seems impossible that it could have screwed up this bad. This was hard in the 1970's but people knock these big sites out that serve tens of millions of people in a week or two. What the hell?

Andrew - A medium level person at NETFLIX

So you see all these stories where Boehner says how much he loves chatting with the Big O and playing golf and you see all of the arch enemies endlessly quoted as saying what a "nice guy he is in-person". Could it be that the Chicago and Silicon Valley Manipulators (and Warren Buffet) picked him as a "face" to run for office because he could "sell the message" while they pull the strings for their nefarious schemes and cover their trail with their "yes-men" surrounding the President? It is just bizarre how the big guy doesn't find out about all this stuff until later and then, suddenly a bunch of senior White House staff suddenly "disappear" around the same time (IE: Emanuel, Rattner, Gibbs, Axelrod). Maybe Obama is a good guy surrounded by Crooks? What about that theory? How does he not find out about this stuff until it is in the ditch? Somebody in the WH is doing what is called "Filtering Information For Effect" and not getting the whole story through to the team. That is why you have a whole bunch of Joseph-like tweeters from right inside the system tweeting about how horrified they are. They won't even let Big O have his own computer because he might get "unfiltered information" and get pissed off. I hear you haven't really had a bad day until Obama yells right in your face.

Let's make a diagram. Who has been there since the inauguration? They are probably hooked in with the manipulators if this theory is correct? Who "left" (so they wouldn't burn the whole thing if they got busted) but still hangs around?

There are two different ways to write daily briefings: 1) Blunt and Open. 2.) Filtered For Effect. You never see him kickin' back with a copy of both the actual NY Times and the Wall Street Journal. (A major left-leaning and right-leaning paper that regular people see everyday too.) Staff would hate it if that happened, if this is what is up.

Aide #1 says: "Don't worry sir, How hard can a website be to build? We got you elected off of one didn't we? People build thousands of giant websites everyday and they handle millions of people. We will take care of everything..."

After walking around the corner Aide #1 says to Bob: "Quick call our backers buddies and see who we owe favors to..."

Gloria Borger - CNN
Today

Does Obama Still Have Faith In Government?

(CNN) -- Irony is a part of life, the cliché goes. And right now, President Barack Obama is living the part, in a big way: He's the civil libertarian defending an activist drone program. He's the liberal with a spy agency caught eavesdropping on the private conversations of friendly leaders. And he's the high-tech health care reformer whose website got stuck at Go.

And so the ultimate irony may be this -- a President who extols the virtues of government has now been sucked into the big government vortex, experiencing (up close and personal, as they say) what it feels like to lose control to the bureaucrats. The ones who are afraid to deliver bad news, not to mention those who don't deliver the news at all. (As in, "the website crashed.") And the surveillance chiefs who, um, didn't initially volunteer that they're spying on the private phone lines of America's best friends.

Maybe the President needs to figure out some new communications tools to make himself clear. (As in, "Angela Merkel's cell is not just another data point.")

Obama, we're told, is frustrated and angered by the pathetic rollout of his signature legislative achievement. He's also clearly re-examining how the National Security Agency decides to target friendly leaders, what we get from it and why we need it at all.

A couple of ex-intelligence officials tell me they're not shocked gambling was going on in Casablanca. ("Our job is to know things," says one.) Whether the President should have known about the monitoring of these specific heads of state is another matter entirely -- and best left to intelligence aficionados. I've asked -- and gotten answers on both sides of the argument.

But here are the larger questions that play into both the website fiasco and the NSA issues: How can a President take control of his own government? How can he make sure he knows what he needs to know? And as the pro-government cheerleader, doesn't he have a special responsibility to make sure it delivers, especially when his legacy hangs in the balance?

The problem is it's never easy to untangle a bureaucratic mess. "So you're the President, you're angry and you want to know how all of this happened," says a former senior administration official. "And the truth is, even you may not be able to figure it out. You just won't have enough time left in office."

Stunning as that sounds, it's probably accurate. Presidents are often isolated, and always the first among equals. So it seems to me that especially in the White House one of the principal jobs of an executive is to understand the incentive subordinates have to conceal information selectively.

People may report facts and then spin them. Bad news is not a good thing to deliver to presidents. Some are protective of the office and the President; giving the President plausible deniability of any problem is often the easiest and safest route. Or, as one former White House hand told me, "People just don't want to upset the boss, or get him blamed for anything."

All of which a President should know going into the Oval Office. If the reason the President did not know about the epic website issues is because the problems were hidden from the ground up, how about this solution: Establish an atmosphere, at all levels, in which truth telling is rewarded, not punished.

If Obama was surprised at the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, then on some level he failed one of the principal tests: Get the truth out of people, even if they know you are not going to like it.

Yes, this is government and humans are humans. But Obamacare has been the signature legislative achievement of this presidency. Everyone knew how complex this would be to get going, at every level.

So here's a question: Why wasn't the A-team led out of the White House, with a daily update to the president? Obama the campaigner was incomparably good at establishing metrics and using information technology to assess the extent to which those metrics were being hit. What happened here?

What seems to have happened was what often happens: The work got delegated to the bureaucrats somewhere else -- HHS? CMS? -- and, as a result, it got bogged down, delayed and muddled. Mistakes went either hidden or unrecognized. If folks down the food chain knew, they were keeping it from their bosses. After all, no reward in telling the truth.

The big question now is whether these problems are evidence of a huge management failure. "One of the things you find after working in government is that, under tremendous pressure, organizations that are supposed to produce accurate information, often don't," says a former senior administration official (think Benghazi). "And you can only rely on what people are telling you."

Or not telling you, as in the case of Merkel's cell phone. If the President and senior officials were not told about the wide range of the program, who thought that secrecy was a good idea?

Does a President have to play a game of Twenty Questions with his own people to figure things out? Or, conversely, as some intelligence officials claim, if the President did know something -- some gible -- why not more? It's not as if Obama is a passive examiner of intelligence; quite the contrary. So what gives here?

Consider this: You're President Obama. You believe in the affirmative use of government. You're trying to govern a country that has lost confidence in the ability of that government to execute anything. And now you discover the website of your prized legislative achievement is a disaster. And the spies were tapping a good ally's cell phone, for no immediately obvious reason.

The final irony may be this: Four out of five Americans have little or no trust in their government to do anything right. And now Obama probably feels the same way.

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What the hell is going on up on the Hill? Is Dianne Spy-stein running the country or what? Is Feinstein feeding all this misleading info to the Pres?

TD

If someone in the White House is lying to the President on a regular basis, isn't that something we need a special prosecutor for?

D- LA Times

Jofi Joseph and his dozens of email and twitter accounts make him the Julian Assange of the White House. His story isn't over yet.

PK

Dems admit reboot needs stronger team

By Amie Parnes and Justin Sink

Former administration officials and Democratic operatives say President Obama is ill-served by his current White House staff and must reboot his second term team following the disastrous ObamaCare rollout.

First-term insiders argue the White House's weakness was defined by a lack of preparedness, messaging blunders and failure to keep the president informed.

They say Obama's team lacks depth after the departures of longtime advisers David Axelrod, David Plouffe, Robert Gibbs and Patrick Gaspard, and suggest new people must be brought on.

"You basically have [White House senior adviser Dan] Pfeiffer and [deputy chief of staff] Rob Nabors running the show politically, and that's it," one former administration official said.

The current White House appears to have "blinders" on, said another former senior official, adding "It's been a weak spot for them during the second term. It's not for a lack of advice, that's for sure."

In the first term, Axelrod and Plouffe alternated at the White House and were seen as the top political strategists for Obama. While both give Obama and his aides advice from afar, neither are now present in the West Wing.

In their place are a host of officials, including White House chief of staff Denis McDonough, senior adviser David Simas, Pfeiffer and Nabors, all of whom have been involved in trying to navigate a political storm first triggered by the launch of a website that was not ready.

HealthCare.gov's problems have put the administration behind its enrollment targets, panicking Democrats.

The rollout was further troubled by the cancellation of millions of insurance plans, despite Obama's promise that people could keep them, a development that angered the public and Democratic allies.

The first former official singled out Pfeiffer for criticism in the handling of that blunder, which led to repeated apologies by Obama as the White House struggled with the story.

"The thing that I hold Pfeiffer accountable for is, 'If you like your plan, you can keep it,' " the former official said.

"I don't know where the breakdown occurred on that, but it's Obama's 'no new taxes' moment," the official said, referring to the broken promise that is widely seen as having cost President George H.W. Bush a second term.

The official said it was "hard to be polite" about the rollout: "It still escapes me how they f---ed up this badly on the president's and the Democratic Party's biggest legacy item in 20 years."

There has been widespread speculation about a White House shake-up as a result of the healthcare law's problems.

Obama himself said last month that those within the White House "have to ask ourselves some hard questions" about "why we didn't see more of these problems coming on."

The healthcare rollout's problems are not the first time there have been suggestions that Obama is missing his A-team in his second term, but they have made those suggestions prominent again.

Plouffe was clearly the leading in-house political adviser before his departure last year.

When he left, his responsibilities were divided among several officials, including Pfeiffer, Nabors, McDonough and Simas.

McDonough, who has been with the president since his Senate days, has accepted much of the responsibility for the botched rollout. And he has taken it upon himself to hold daily meetings on the issue with core players. He also treks up to Capitol Hill periodically to meet with lawmakers, who have been known to vent their frustration to the chief of staff.

Other important figures include senior adviser Valerie Jarrett, a family friend who has unparalleled access to Obama, and deputy chief of staff Alyssa Mastromonaco.

Ahead of the healthcare rollout, some argue that too much information appears to have been kept from Obama. He has said he was not aware of the debacle developing on the ObamaCare website even though warnings were coming in from consultants.

"The thing that pisses me off the most is there was a conscious decision not to tell the president how bad things were, and he was not well served by that," the first former administration official said. "It would have been nice if he would have known how much crow he had to eat ahead of time. No one likes surprises."

A better political strategy and messaging could not have solved all of the problems the White House faced with ObamaCare since its rollout on Oct. 1.

Spin could not have obscured error messages on an inadequate website, nor made people feel better upon learning that their health insurance plan had been canceled, despite assurances to the contrary.

"It's not about spin; it's about policy," said Princeton University professor Julian Zelizer. "They're dealing with a policy that, for the time, is being seen as very problematic, and even with the best media people in the world, you can't control that."

Critics of ObamaCare argue that the law itself is faulty and will remain a millstone around Obama and congressional Democrats.

Yet many say the White House could have played its bad hand better.

"It's a mystery to me how they could not have foreseen the arguments that would be made against it — they're the same as against HillaryCare — and not gotten ahead of the curve," Democratic operative Garry South said.

South said the White House should have known from decades of battles that Americans are largely suspicious of government expansion.

"This is a group that runs brilliant campaigns, but the messaging parts of the campaign they are very adept at have not really seeped over to the governing side," he said.

Recent days have provided some positive signs for the president's messaging operation, with local and national media outlets increasingly highlighting ObamaCare success stories.

If the website functions well, it could boost enrollment on the exchanges and energize the White House.

Still, Democratic strategist Chris Lehane says the White House must focus on "credibility building."

A survey released last week by CNN and ORC found that just 40 percent of Americans now believe the president can manage the government effectively — a 12-point drop from the summer.

To recover, Lehane says, the administration needs to set reasonably attainable goals on enrollment numbers and website usability that can be accomplished in rapid succession.

"They're going to have to set some expectations and then make damn sure they're meeting those expectations and exceeding those expectations," he said.

By The Hill Staff

This list is a rundown of the people President Obama relies on to make his administration operate.

The people described in the pages that follow are tirelessly attempting to achieve the president's second term goals. Many of them are veterans of either the president's first term or his 2012 reelection effort.

Some of the 44th president's confidantes are working inside the White House, including chief of staff Denis McDonough, senior adviser Valerie Jarrett and director of speechwriting Cody Keenan.

There are many others on The Hill's list who don't spend a lot of time at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. But they are running huge programs, such as Richard Cordray, who heads the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director, and Robert Hale, the Pentagon comptroller and chief financial officer.

The list generally doesn't include Cabinet members because those officials are obviously key members of Obama's team. An exception to that rule is Michael Froman, the nation's top trade official who is negotiating major deals with a variety of nations.

Several health experts working for Obama made the cut, including Chris Jennings. The veteran of the Clinton White House is playing a crucial role in trying to fix the implementation problems plaguing ObamaCare. Jeff Zients, who is tasked with fixing HealthCare.gov, also makes an appearance.

Other policy officials who are in this special section work on energy, telecommunications, intelligence, homeland security, food safety and the budget.

Communication and messaging officials are also recognized. Dan Pfeiffer, Jay Carney, Josh Earnest, Caitlin Hayden, Eric Schultz and Amy Brundage are among Obama's 44 go-to players.

Several White House officials on the list are especially busy this fall in the wake of the flawed ObamaCare rollout: deputy chief of staff for policy Rob Nabors; deputy senior communications adviser David Simas and director of legislative affairs Miguel Rodriguez. The trio has been attempting to soothe tensions between congressional Democrats and the White House.

We hope this list will be an excellent reference for members of Congress, Capitol Hill staffers, regulators, lobbyists and others.



Tony Blinken, deputy national security adviser

Tony Blinken's emergence on the national stage came when he answered questions at the White House briefing room about the U.S. response to chemical weapons use in Syria.

For decades, the 51-year-old foreign policy veteran had worked behind the scenes, steering foreign policy in the Clinton administration.

During former President George W Bush's administration, he worked as a staff director and trusted adviser to Vice President Biden, who was then the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Blinken was forced to walk back an interview with NPR in which he said that President Obama would not strike Syria without congressional approval, but the misstep hasn't kept the White House from leaning heavily on the former New Republic journalist to talk foreign policy to the press.

— *Justin Sink*



Amy Brundage, deputy press secretary

Amy Brundage is responsible for framing economic fights with Congress to the public — an important role, given how President Obama's agenda has been dominated by budget battles.

A holdover from Obama's Senate staff, Brundage attended the College of the Holy Cross with Obama speechwriter Jon Favreau before taking an internship in John Kerry's (D-Mass.) Senate office. She was hired as a scheduler to Kerry's presidential campaign, joined his Senate staff in 2005 and eventually became his national press secretary.

She took the same position in Obama's Senate shop in 2007 and has followed the president ever since, serving as the spokeswoman for his presidential transition team and then as regional communications director at the White House.

She became deputy press secretary in 2011.

— *Justin Sink*



Sylvia Burwell, White House budget director

President Obama dipped again into the Clinton-era Democratic talent pool this year when he tapped Sylvia Burwell to be his new director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The West Virginia native had served as former President Clinton's deputy OMB director during an era of balanced budgets, before going on to lead the Wal-Mart Foundation. Burwell is well liked by Republicans and was confirmed by the Senate in a 96-0 vote in April. As Obama tried to woo centrist Senate Republicans for a budget deal, Burwell became a major player.

When that effort failed and the fiscal standoff with Congress deepened, she was tasked with preparing the government for its first shutdown since 1996.

— *Erik Wasson*



Jay Carney, White House press secretary

President Obama's tough year has made his press secretary's job even harder.

Jay Carney has served as the public face of the White House in a year dominated by pointed questions about ObamaCare, the IRS, National Security Agency surveillance programs and many other issues.

Carney used to ask the tough questions as a reporter for Time magazine, working as a White House correspondent and Moscow bureau chief.

He joined the Obama administration as press secretary to Vice President Biden, moving into the West Wing after the departure of longtime Obama confidante Robert Gibbs.

Asked earlier this year about his job, Carney said he relished the tough questions and sharp exchanges, saying it was a privilege to stand at the presidential podium.

— *Justin Sink*



James Clapper, director of national intelligence

James Clapper, the nation's top intelligence official, is at the center of the controversy over the National Security Agency's surveillance programs.

Congress created the role of Director of National Intelligence after Sept. 11, 2001, to coordinate and oversee the 17 intelligence agencies and to be the president's top intelligence adviser. Clapper, a retired Air Force general, is the fourth official to hold the job.

Following the security leaks by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, Clapper has testified in front of Congress numerous times defending the intelligence community and the secrecy that shrouds it.

Some members of Congress have called for Clapper to resign due to a false answer he gave during a Senate hearing earlier in the year. Clapper had claimed that the government does "not wittingly" collect any information on millions of Americans. In fact, the Snowden leaks revealed that the NSA collects records on virtually all U.S. phone calls.

— *Brendan Sasso*



Gary Cohen, deputy administrator and director, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Gary Cohen isn't the public face of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, but as the White House point man at the agency tasked with implementing the Affordable Care Act, he's having to negotiate through a thorny patch of political and logistical issues.

Among the plates the CMS has spinning under Cohen's leadership: the strategic decision to withhold ObamaCare enrollment data; tempering expectations to reflect slow initial interest; the high-wire act of fixing a broken website while it's available to consumers; daily media availabilities with tech status updates; working with contractors that the CMS has publicly criticized; and responding to subpoenas and committee requests.

He holds a law degree from Stanford University School of Law and received a bachelor's degree from Brown University.

— *Jonathan Easley*



Richard Cordray, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director

Richard Cordray is charting the course for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, perhaps the most significant piece of President Obama's landmark financial reform law.

The new bureau is intended to ensure consumers are treated fairly by mortgage providers, credit card companies and other financial players, and Cordray has the authority to crack down on bad actors.

Republicans and industry groups have grumbled that the bureau has too much power, and friction is likely during the director's five-year term. Yet Cordray, a former state attorney general and treasurer from Ohio, has won positive reviews on the job so far after a rocky confirmation fight.

— *Peter Schroeder*



Michael Daniel, Special assistant to the president and cybersecurity coordinator

Michael Daniel is the president's top adviser for cybersecurity issues. A martial arts enthusiast, he spent 17 years at the Office of Management and Budget, including time overseeing intelligence agencies.

Daniel's job is to protect government computer systems from hackers and to work with the private sector to better protect their networks. The White House had urged Congress to pass legislation to require cybersecurity standards for critical infrastructure, such as banks, telecommunications companies and power grids. But Republicans blocked the bill, arguing it would impose burdensome new regulations.

Following the measure's failure, Obama issued an executive order to set voluntary cybersecurity rules. Daniel will try to convince companies to follow those guidelines, which are being crafted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

— *Brendan Sasso*



Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Gen. Martin Dempsey has become the president's key military adviser as the administration navigates through a host of foreign policy challenges in President Obama's second term.

The four-star Army general, known for his ability to carry a tune, has been at the helm of the Joint Chiefs of Staff since 2011, and the president tapped him for a second two-year term earlier this year.

Dempsey gave the president cover this year from criticism in Congress over Syria, as the chairman repeatedly expressed skepticism toward military action when defense hawks were clamoring for airstrikes and a no-fly zone. Now he's tasked with handling the difficult decisions that accompany ending the longest war in U.S. history, in Afghanistan, by the end of 2014.

— *Jeremy Herb*



Josh Earnest, White House principal deputy press secretary

In a sea of new faces in the West Wing, Josh Earnest is a constant.

An "Obama Original," Earnest, who has been with the president since he began his run for the White House in 2007, provides institutional knowledge on almost every aspect of the press shop and its dealings.

He not only serves as a mouthpiece for Obama — even subbing for White House press secretary Jay Carney at the podium and on Air Force One from time to time — he makes decisions from logistics to larger administration rollouts, and manages personnel to boot.

Some observers speculate that the even-keeled Missouri native is a front-runner to replace Carney at the podium when he chooses to step down.

Earnest says the give-and-take with the media is a good thing.

"If there isn't some tension between the press office and the press corps, then at least one side is not doing their job," Earnest said. "But, if you remember that a little conflict is built in to the system, then it's a little easier to get past it and not let it interfere with doing your job. That mindset is evident in both the most effective journalists and the most effective spokespeople."

— *Amie Parnes*



Michael Froman, U.S. trade representative

Michael Froman's relationship with President Obama dates back more than two decades, to their time together as editors working on the Harvard Law Review.

Now the nation's top trade official, Froman serves as Obama's principal adviser and negotiator on international trade issues.

The former Citigroup executive is now at the forefront of negotiations in support of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a major trade pact including Canada, Mexico, Japan and a host of other nations.

The 51-year old policymaker is also the president's proxy in talks between the U.S. and the European Union, known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. He was confirmed by the Senate by a 93-4 vote in June.

— *Ben Goad*

By The Hill Staff - 11/21/13 06:00 AM EST



Jason Furman, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers

Jason Furman capped years of work as an economic adviser to President Obama with his appointment as chief of the president's economic council.

Furman was a central player in the development and implementation of the Obama administration's two tent-pole first-term accomplishments: the stimulus package and the Affordable Care Act.

A White House official described him as "one of the key architects" of the 2010 payroll tax cut. He was also an advocate for the 2012 tax deal that increased the marginal tax rate on the wealthiest Americans.

The Harvard-trained Ph.D. also served as the face of the White House's effort to repeal the sequester.

— *Justin Sink*



Joe Goffman, counsel, Environmental Protection Agency Office of Air and Radiation

A big chunk of President Obama's climate agenda lies in the hands of Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy as the agency crafts carbon emissions rules for power plants.

That means, behind the scenes, Joe Goffman is a crucial player in the ambitious plan to craft emissions rules for the nation's existing power plants, which the agency plans to finalize in 2015.

He's already been through a tough challenge in crafting separate proposed rules for existing plants. White House climate adviser Heather Zichal quipped in September that Goffman is "the guy that looks like he just spent the summer reading 2.5 million comments."

Goffman was previously a senior aide with the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. He holds undergraduate and law degrees from Yale University.

— *Ben Geman*

Avril Haines, deputy director of the CIA

Avril Haines is the president's go-to lawyer at the Central Intelligence Agency as the agency revamps its controversial drone strike program. She had never worked for the CIA before President Obama tapped her for the role in June, a surprise move less than two months after he'd nominated her to be the top lawyer at the State Department.

Haines previously served as the legal counsel on the president's National Security Council, where she helped develop the new legal standards underpinning the targeted killings of alleged terrorists that the president demanded following mounting reports of civilian casualties in airstrikes.

Consistently described as a soft-spoken workaholic, Haines has a most unconventional background for a Washington power player, having been an amateur pilot and a bookstore owner before her career as a government lawyer.

— *Julian Pecquet*



Robert Hale, Pentagon comptroller and chief financial officer

Since becoming President Obama's top budget official at the Pentagon, Robert Hale has had the unenviable task of guiding the Defense Department through its largest drawdown since the 1990s.

Hale became the point person inside the Pentagon to usher in billions in budget cuts under the 2011 Budget Control Act.

Instituted under then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the measure's cuts faced severe criticism from defense hawks in Congress, who claimed they would reduce the Pentagon's ability

to fight future wars.

Obama is now looking to Hale to shepherd an additional \$500 billion in defense spending reductions under the administration's sequestration plan. The cuts began in March and would reduce Pentagon spending by \$52 billion next year.

Hale, a former Congressional Budget Office staffer, graduated from Stanford University with a degree in mathematics and statistics.

— *Carlo Muñoz*

Caitlin Hayden, National Security Council spokeswoman

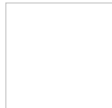
Nuclear talks with Iran and the crisis in Syria have given 35-year-old Caitlin Hayden an increasingly prominent role fielding questions and explaining the Obama administration's foreign and national security policy.

A career civil servant in the State Department, Hayden had been doing national security work for the U.S. government since finishing graduate school at the University of Georgia. (Despite her stint in Athens, she still roots for her undergraduate alma mater, Alabama.)

Her career in Foggy Bottom began the day before 9/11, and Hayden has since done stints in Kuwait, Iraq and the United Kingdom, as well as taken dozens of trips to hot spots like Afghanistan and Pakistan.

She'll travel to Iceland next year to marry an Icelandic diplomat serving in Washington.

— *Justin Sink*



John Holdren, White House science adviser

A big part of President Obama's push on climate change rests on a simple message: Follow the science.

The president relies on John Holdren, a bookish Harvard professor before joining the White House, as one of the people who can deliver that message.

This low-key post includes supplying Obama's staff with scientific information that informs policy, not to mention serving as a bridge to academia and other stakeholders, and helping to craft the federal research budget.

Holdren was previously the Teresa and John Heinz professor of environmental policy and director of the program on science, technology and public policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, according to the White House.

He was also a professor in Harvard's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, and director of the independent, nonprofit Woods Hole Research Center.

— *Ben Geman*



Valerie Jarrett, White House senior adviser

Vogue magazine dubbed her President Obama's rock.

And as far as the West Wing goes, that couldn't be truer of senior adviser and longtime Obama friend Valerie Jarrett.

Jarrett, 56, arrived in Washington with no national political experience.

Still, the 57-year-old lawyer and former chairman of the Chicago Transit Board, has long been the president's eyes and ears around the White House.

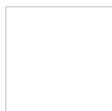
As one senior administration official put it, she is in charge of "getting the president's message out and bringing the people's message in."

Moreover, she counsels the president on some of his biggest and most pressing decisions because no one on the staff is quite as familiar with what makes him tick.

As a longtime pal of the first couple who often spends time with the family in the residence, "she yields the most power in the White House," said one former senior administration official. "And everyone knows that. I don't think the president trusts anyone more."

And while other aides around the president have left the White House orbit, Jarrett is a mainstay.

— *Amie Parnes*



Chris Jennings, deputy assistant to the president for health policy

Chris Jennings was a pre-ObamaCare-rollout addition to the president's staff whose role became even more critical after the law's catastrophic launch.

He spent six years as a senior adviser to President Clinton, 10 years as a Senate aide, and more than a decade as a healthcare lobbyist and consultant. He helped negotiate major healthcare deals in the 1990s, most notably the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

His Capitol Hill connections and reputation as a communicator who can cross the partisan divide makes him a critical component of the White House team. Jennings is one of the few who can go deep into the healthcare policy weeds while also reading the political winds.

— *Jonathan Easley*



Cody Keenan, White House director of speechwriting

Cody Keenan never expected to be a speechwriter. Period. Never mind the chief speechwriter for a president known for, well, giving speeches.

For a while at least, the 33-year-old Connecticut native had ambitions of being an orthopedic surgeon.

But here he is in the West Wing, more than six years after joining the Obama campaign as a speechwriting intern. He is responsible for helping to craft some of President Obama's most memorable speeches, including the one almost a year ago in Newtown, Conn., in the days following the mass shooting at an elementary school.

While Keenan notes that Obama is really the head speechwriter, he said he does feel a "crushing sense of responsibility" in the role and in knowing the president's voice.

He sits in on the 7:45 a.m. meeting each morning with top White House aides and meets with the president on an average of a few times a week to go over upcoming speeches. While his day in the West Wing typically ends around 7 p.m., the job follows him home, where he prefers to write at night.

— *Amie Pames*



Alyssa Mastromonaco, White House deputy chief of staff

If there's any one who deserves much of the credit for keeping President Obama's trains running on time, it's Alyssa Mastromonaco, her colleagues say.

Mastromonaco, 37, is responsible for overseeing scheduling, advance and presidential personnel. She spends a good chunk of her time making sure the first family, Secret Service and White House staff are all on the same page.

But she can also be found at the heart of major issues facing the White House, including managing the response to Hurricane Sandy and other natural disasters.

A scheduler-at-heart who has worked in the Senate for John Kerry and later for his presidential bid, Mastromonaco is hyperorganized, as one would expect her to be, known to schedule reminders to catch her favorite TV show or take her vitamins, as she confessed to *The Hill* in an interview last year.

"If this is the person you have to be, these are the things you have to do," she said.

— *Amie Pames*



Denis McDonough, White House chief of staff

Denis McDonough wears many hats as White House chief of staff.

But his colleagues say his most important role in the job has been to play that of the "Congress whisperer."

Since accepting the job earlier this year, McDonough, once an aide to former Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), has made it a priority to improve the dialogue with Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill.

How has he done? "So far, so good," said one top Democrat who was not keen on some of the chief of staff's predecessors.

One senior White House official said McDonough believes in engaging a wide swath of people to get input on agenda items and issues facing the White House. The official said McDonough has emphasized reaching out to journalists, strategists and other groups for their opinions on various issues.

But more than anything, McDonough is what principal deputy press secretary Josh Earnest called "a staffer's chief of staff."

"Denis brings many strengths to the job," Earnest said. "He has an incredible capacity to handle lots of different things."

He's been known to ride his bike to work. And earlier this year, after taking the job, he could be seen sporting a handwritten card attached to his workbag that read: "Denis McDonough, chief of staff."

— *Amie Pames*

By The Hill Staff - 11/21/13 06:00 AM EST



Tara McGuinness, senior communications adviser

Hiring Tara McGuinness this spring indicated the White House's increasing focus on the ObamaCare rollout following the 2012 election. A strategic communications expert, she has helped shape the White House's healthcare message at crucial times, including after the delay of the employer mandate in July and amid the ongoing problems with the enrollment website. While signaling early on that she would be helping to sell ObamaCare to the public, McGuinness's work is now oriented toward assisting the White House as it navigates troubling news cycles focused on negative aspects of the healthcare rollout.

McGuinness honed her skills as a press secretary on Secretary of State John Kerry's 2004 presidential run and on a range of House, Senate and issue campaigns. She also helped lead Americans Against Escalation in Iraq before holding several senior positions at the Center for American Progress.

— *Elise Viebeck*



Lisa Monaco, assistant to the president for homeland security & counterterrorism

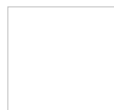
President Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser was in her first month on the job when homegrown terrorists planted bombs that killed three and injured dozens at the annual marathon in Boston, where Monaco was raised.

The University of Chicago Law School graduate was immediately thrust into the weeklong manhunt for the culprits, the latest chapter in a high-stakes, high-pressure career.

Monaco is a veteran of former Attorney General Janet Reno's Justice Department and worked to convict Enron executives as a prosecutor in the George W. Bush administration.

"Lisa has no rival when it comes to her dedication to this nation, her experience in national security issues and her excellent judgment," Attorney General Eric Holder said after she was nominated.

— *Justin Sink*



Cecilia Muñoz, director of the Domestic Policy Council

The veteran Latino civil rights advocate Muñoz is the White House's foremost champion for immigration reform, one of Obama's most important second-term goals.

The Detroit-born daughter of Bolivian immigrants, Muñoz was awarded a MacArthur Foundation fellowship in 2000 in recognition of her work on immigration policy.

She joined the administration after two decades at the National Council of La Raza, where she oversaw work on immigration policy, poverty, education, health and housing.

The passage of immigration reform "will shape who we are just as much as failing to pass it will shape us," Muñoz told an audience earlier this month at her alma mater, the University of Michigan.

— *Justin Sink*



Rob Nabors, White House deputy chief of staff for policy

Rob Nabors has repeatedly negotiated high-profile deals with Congress for the White House, making him one of the city's most effective power brokers.

Most recently, the White House deputy chief of staff helped President Obama orchestrate October's agreement to reopen the government. In 2011, as head of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs, the low-key Nabors catalyzed a similar budget deal that defined that summer.

The previous year, as senior adviser to then-White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, Nabors helped push through the healthcare reforms that remain the administration's signature domestic achievement. And in 2009, as deputy to then-Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Peter Orszag, Nabors had a hand in the passage of Obama's economic stimulus bill.

No stranger to the game, Nabors launched his Washington career with the OMB under the Clinton administration before moving to Capitol Hill, where he served as a top aide to former Rep. Dave Obey (D-Wis.) on the Appropriations Committee.

— *Mike Lillis*



Jennifer Palmieri, communications director

Jennifer Palmieri is a veteran of Washington's political fights, and has the battle scars to prove it.

Palmieri, 46, served eight years in the Clinton White House, including three as deputy press secretary.

She later worked on both of John Edwards's presidential campaigns, where she grew close to the candidate's wife, Elizabeth. When Edwards's infidelity and out-of-wedlock child were exposed, Palmieri became a top adviser to Elizabeth.

"Jen is one of the best communicators in either party, and we're lucky she's on our side of the ledger and agreed to come back in and do this," Obama deputy campaign manager Stephanie Cutter told The Washington Post.

Before joining the Obama White House, she served as a vice president at the Center for American Progress.

— *Justin Sink*



Todd Park, U.S. chief technology officer

Todd Park is the top technology expert in the White House and advises the president and federal agencies on how best to use technologies.

Silicon Valley praised President Obama when he created the position of CTO in 2009; Park is the second official to serve in the role. One of his top goals is to make more government data available to the public.

The botched launch of the ObamaCare website has thrust Park into the spotlight. The White House rejected a request from the House Oversight Committee to have Park testify at a hearing in early November, saying he was too busy trying to fix the site. After Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) issued a subpoena, Park agreed to appear before the panel.

Before becoming the White House CTO, Park served as CTO at the Department of Health and Human Services, where he worked on using data to improve healthcare systems.

— *Brendan Sasso*



Dan Pfeiffer, White House senior adviser

When campaign mastermind David Plouffe left his role at the White House after President Obama's reelection, communications director-turned-senior adviser Dan Pfeiffer stepped into the role, helping to plot the West Wing's moves and machinations.

While it's a challenge to fill the void left by Plouffe — "No one can take the place of David Plouffe," as one former White House official put it — Pfeiffer is more than up to the task, his colleagues say.

For one thing, Pfeiffer has been with Obama since he served as the communications director on the 2008 presidential campaign, and has a good understanding of his boss's immediate and long-term goals. When Obama stood his ground on not negotiating with congressional Republicans over the government shutdown and debt ceiling, it was Pfeiffer who was the "relentless guardian" of the president's stance, according to one senior administration official.

"He's been the most ferocious on that principle," the senior administration official said.

— *Amie Parnes*



Samantha Power, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations

A former reporter who received a Pulitzer Prize for a book examining genocide, Samantha Power is known around the globe as a tireless advocate for human rights.

In political circles, she's remembered for calling Hillary Clinton a "monster" during the 2008 presidential campaign — a controversy she weathered to serve as an adviser to President Obama during his first term, when she often worked with Clinton.

In New York, Iran and Syria are among the foreign policy issues expected to dominate her time.

"I get to go to work every day and sit in front of the placard that says 'United States' as I try to promote American values and interests," Power said. "Who could ask for a better job?"

— *Justin Sink*



Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser for strategic communications

Ben Rhodes has been the president's voice on the world stage ever since he helped craft then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama's first foreign-policy speech in April 2007. He's had a hand in some of Obama's most famous addresses around the world, including his Cairo speech to the Muslim world and his call for nuclear disarmament in Prague.

Since being promoted to deputy national security adviser in 2009, Rhodes has taken on a significant role in foreign policy decision-making, urging the president to abandon Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and to intervene more actively in Syria.

A onetime aspiring fiction author, Rhodes got his start in politics on then-New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani's 1997 reelection campaign; he later spent five years working for former Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), helping to draft the 9/11 Commission and the Iraq Study Group reports.

— *Julian Pecquet*



Susan Rice, national security adviser

Susan Rice has landed right at the president's side as his national security adviser after getting passed over for her dream job as secretary of State in the fallout over the 2012 attack in Benghazi, Libya. The post has put her at the heart of the foreign policy challenges facing President Obama in his second term, including nuclear talks with Iran and the crisis in Syria.

A close Obama confidante who served as his senior foreign policy adviser during the 2008 presidential campaign, Rice is in charge of carrying out the president's instructions to extricate the United States from the Middle East.

After advocating for U.S. intervention in Libya as ambassador to the United Nations during Obama's first term, she now finds herself seeking to avoid new military commitments in the region.

— *Julian Pecquet*



Miguel Rodriguez, White House director of legislative affairs

In his second term, President Obama has been looking for willing partners across the aisle to push his agenda items.

With a Congress seemingly more divided than ever, that means Miguel Rodriguez has his work cut out for him. But he's certainly used to the pressure, according to those who know him.

Rodriguez, 41, who previously served at the State Department as the deputy assistant secretary, where he oversaw Foggy Bottom's ties to the Senate for Hillary Clinton, splits his time between the White House and Capitol Hill. He deals with everything from complaints from lawmakers down to the more mundane tasks like helping set up White House tours for members.

Since he began heading up the office in February, he vividly recalls meeting with White House chief of staff Denis McDonough about a Capitol Hill charm offensive "purposefully," with an eye towards improving White House relations with lawmakers and their aides.

"It's definitely a challenge," Rodriguez said in an interview. "As we've tried to demonstrate, we'll work with anyone who has good ideas."

— *Amie Pames*

By The Hill Staff - 11/21/13 06:00 AM EST



Eric Schultz, White House deputy press secretary

Call him the West Wing's fireman.

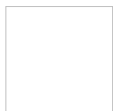
If there's smoke coming from a fire, ranging from the latest problems with HealthCare.gov to government surveillance controversies, Eric Schultz is undoubtedly nearby.

Schultz's portfolio deals with the challenges of any given day. He was brought on in the spring of 2011 as associate communications director to deal with oversight — read: all things related to Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), the House Oversight Committee chairman — when Republicans took over the House. But his role as the West Wing's rapid-response guy has since expanded to include a large array of other prickly items.

Among his main responsibilities, Schultz, 33, who previously served as the communications director at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, is to proactively get out the White House perspective and President Obama's reaction to various hot-button situations.

Schultz, 33, says, "Our job is to get the most accurate information available to us out as soon as we are certain it's reliable and complete. And push for a fair shake from the press."

— *Amie Pames*



Howard Shelanski, Director of the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs

Howard Shelanski serves as the White House's gatekeeper for the most important — and often most controversial — rules written within agencies across the federal government.

Shelanski was confirmed in June as administrator of the obscure but influential Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). He comes to the post at a time when President Obama, faced with a starkly divided Congress, is increasingly looking to the regulatory system as a means to accomplish many of his policy goals.

The administration's rule-making policies have sparked intense debate between public interest watchdogs that say the government is dragging its feet on important protections and business groups that complain the influx of new rules is stifling the economy.

In his brief tenure, Shelanski has won praise from both sides, both reducing an inherited backlog of rules under review at OIRA and pledging to expand the administration's effort to get rid of overly burdensome regulations.

— Ben Goad



Wendy Sherman, Undersecretary of State for political affairs

The State Department's third-ranking official is in the international spotlight as she seeks to deliver on President Obama's bid for a diplomatic breakthrough with Iran. As the lead U.S. negotiator to the nuclear talks, Wendy Sherman must craft a deal that's acceptable not only to the Iranians, but to a deeply skeptical Congress as well.

And that's only part of her brief. Sherman's role as the day-to-day manager of America's bilateral and regional relations puts her in charge of seven bureaus, covering the whole world as well as U.S. policy towards international organizations.

A political appointee to a high-profile post usually held by career diplomats, Sherman was previously vice chairwoman of former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's international consulting firm. She served as counselor to President Clinton's State Department from 1997 to 2001 and as his special adviser on North Korea.

— Julian Pecquet



David Simas, deputy senior communications adviser

David Simas was the polling ace on President Obama's reelection team who helped manage the campaign's impressive ground game. Returning to the White House earlier this year, the former chief of staff to Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick (D) is now embroiled in the communications effort surrounding the attempts to fix HealthCare.gov.

The shift contrasts greatly with Simas's work ahead of Oct. 1, when he delivered a series of briefings touting what the White House believed would be ObamaCare's groundbreaking and user-friendly enrollment site. The presentations were aimed at lawmakers, journalists and those working on Capitol Hill, and attempted to counter a rising Republican narrative that the system would not be ready.

Now, Simas is presiding over the White House's pivot toward the Medicaid expansion as the site continues to falter. Obama is pushing states like Texas and Louisiana to embrace the policy, which would cover millions of low-income people. "It is reckless that some governors are so determined to see that the healthcare law not succeed that they have even decided not to expand Medicaid coverage," Simas recently told reporters.

— Elise Viebeck



Todd Stern, deputy special envoy for climate change at the State Department

Todd Stern is the State Department's top climate change diplomat at a crucial time.

He's representing the United States in delicate United Nations-hosted talks aimed at crafting a binding global climate pact in 2015 that would take effect five years later.

Stern does vital spadework on the international front on a topic that's getting fresh attention from the White House and is a signature priority for John Kerry, President Obama's second-term secretary of State.

United Nations climate talks got a jolt in 2009 when Obama arrived in Copenhagen and helped salvage a modest interim agreement that prevented the process from collapsing.

Stern was a White House aide in the Clinton administration, working on international climate negotiations and other issues, and also did a stint at the Treasury Department.

Before joining the Obama administration, he was a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think with deep White House ties.

— Ben Geman



Larry Strickling, administrator, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Larry Strickling advises the president on telecommunications and Internet policy issues.

Strickling has advised President Obama since his 2008 campaign and has served as the head of NTIA, a Commerce Department agency, since 2009. The agency is overseeing the construction of a nationwide high-speed wireless network for first responders, a main recommendation of the 9/11 Commission Report. The agency is also leading voluntary negotiations with Internet companies to establish stronger privacy protection standards.

Strickling is looking into ways to make federal agencies use the airwaves more efficiently so that more frequencies can be sold-off to help cellphone carriers meet skyrocketing demand for mobile data.

He was also a major voice in the White House's decision to express concern with controversial legislation to crackdown on online piracy in 2012. A massive Web protest forced Congress to drop the bill.

— Brendan Sasso



Michael Taylor, food safety czar

Since coming to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2010 as the first-ever deputy commissioner for foods, Michael Taylor has been front and center in the agency's

transformation into a proactive agency that tracks and prevents foodborne illness outbreaks before people get sick.

Taylor was brought on to the Obama administration in large part to help pass the Food Safety Modernization Act, which was signed into law in 2011. Now, as the country's "food safety czar," he's the main man in charge of implementing the legislation.

He started his career as a staff attorney with the FDA, and also led the Department of Agriculture's food safety service during the Clinton administration.

But some liberal groups have criticized Taylor since he entered his current office, due to the three years he spent as vice president for public policy at the agricultural giant Monsanto.

— *Julian Hattem*



Shawn Turner, director of public affairs, Office of the Director of National Intelligence

Shawn Turner is responsible for coordinating messaging for the intelligence community's 16 disparate agencies, meaning he's had to defend the administration's spy programs from critics foreign and domestic since the revelations of Edward Snowden.

Turner calls the debate about the spying programs important, but argues the national security implications involved cannot be ignored.

"It is equally important," he says, "that we not lose sight of the fact that intelligence sheds light on the intentions of our adversaries and gives the president the information he needs to make informed national security decisions."

A Cincinnati native, Turner's escape is carpentry and woodworking; he's currently building his daughters a backyard tree house — complete with a zip line.

— *Justin Sink*



Dan Utech, White House climate and energy adviser

Dan Utech will fill Heather Zichal's shoes as top White House aide to President Obama on climate change and energy.

He takes over for Zichal, who left in mid-November, as the administration is devoting increased attention to climate change — and as Obama is facing an explosive decision on the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

Utech, who already worked on energy and climate at the White House Domestic Policy Council before he was tapped as a top adviser, will manage a climate change chessboard of sorts from the White House.

The sweeping White House second-term climate plan includes steps on the domestic and international front that involve a range of agencies.

Prior to coming to the White House, Utech advised then-Energy Secretary Steven Chu, and before that advised Hillary Clinton when she was in the Senate.

— *Ben Geman*



Michael Vickers, Undersecretary of Defense for intelligence

Michael Vickers has been President Obama's key adviser inside the Pentagon for the administration's covert war on terrorism.

He first oversaw the U.S. military's expanded role in those operations as the head of the Defense Department's special operations division and later as Undersecretary of Defense for intelligence.

During that time, Vickers was part of the military and intelligence team that planned and executed the killing of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in May 2011, arguably the greatest national security achievement of Obama's presidency.

A former Army special forces and CIA operations officer, Vickers also oversaw the dramatic rise in armed drone strikes and so-called "kill/capture" missions by U.S. special operations forces against al Qaeda, the Taliban and other militant extremist groups worldwide.

— *Carlo Muñoz*



Jeff Zients, ObamaCare website czar

Jeff Zients is one of Obama's go-to problem solvers.

The 46-year-old former business executive has spent the past four years shuffling around the bureaucratic hierarchy troubleshooting some of the federal government's biggest challenges.

More broadly, during his time at the White House's budget office — including two stints as acting director — he focused on ways to eliminate inefficiencies across federal agencies.

Zients has built a reputation as a behind-the-scenes guru who applies two decades of business experience to diagnose and solve government conundrums.

His success has earned him what may be his toughest and most high-profile assignment yet.

The president has asked him to lead the charge with fixing technical issues plaguing the ObamaCare website ahead of taking over as the administration's chief economic adviser and director of the National Economic Council in January.

Easing the anxiety of congressional Democrats, Zients has promised that the website will be fixed by the end of November.

— *Vicki Needham*