

OPENING STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

AFTER THE DUST SETTLES: EXAMINING CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN TRANSITIONING
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

APRIL 22, 2010

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing.

As my colleagues know, I am facing a transition of my own. In January 2011, I will leave the United States Senate for other pursuits, specifically, more time with my wife, Janet, and my grandchildren.

In anticipation of this departure, I have directed my staff to take a number of actions to ensure an orderly wind-down of my office's operations. All aspects of this process will be addressed—from cataloguing the contents of my offices to planning for the closure or transfer of important constituent casework issues.

But as my close friend Senator Akaka knows, we haven't yet reached the point where I am ready to wind-down. This Subcommittee still has important work to do, including examining, and considering improvements to, how the Federal government transitions to a new presidential administration.

Perhaps more than any of its predecessors, the Bush-Obama transition was dealt the longest odds for achieving a smooth transfer of power.

As my colleagues well know, the Bush-Obama transition was the first of the modern era to occur during wartime, and the first to follow a general election in which the incumbent president or vice president did not vie for the presidency.

The Bush-Obama transition was also the first to occur in the post-September 11th world, and the first since the largest reorganization of government in over six decades.

And as the candidates entered the last week of the campaign, the second worst month in history for the Standard & Poor's 500 was drawing to a close after that index plunged 27 percent in four weeks' time.

These challenges would be more than enough for any well-disciplined transition effort to confront. Yet in January 2010, shortly before the anniversary of President Obama's inauguration, the American public learned through press accounts of still another threat confronted by the outgoing and incoming administrations.

In the days preceding the Presidential Inauguration, intelligence reports surfaced that al-Shabaab, a Somali terrorist organization with ties to al-Qaeda, was planning an attack on the crowds that would gather to witness the administration of the oath of office to our 44th President. The threat was taken so seriously that the Secretary of Defense did not attend the inaugural ceremonies in order to ensure continuity of the nation's national security apparatus.

Despite the challenges faced by the Bush-Obama transition, this most recent transfer of power most closely approached our transition ideal. Both the President and President-elect understood the gravity of the tasks before them, and undertook early and robust planning efforts.

President Bush began preparing his administration for the transition earlier than any other presidency when he directed then White House Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten in late 2007 to ensure “the transition is as effective as possible, especially in the national security area.”

For his part, President-elect Obama established the largest transition organization to date. At its peak, the Obama-Biden Transition Project's staff numbered 679, with a budget of more than \$12 million, \$7 million of which came from private contributions.

In many ways, this most recent transition effort was the best case scenario. The transition succeeded because of the character and values of those tasked with leading the effort, individuals like those joining the Subcommittee today: Clay Johnson, John Podesta, and Gail Lovelace.

I look forward to hearing from Mr. Johnson and Mr. Podesta about the successes and challenges of the Bush-Obama Transition.

Career agency personnel played a key role in ensuring continuity of services during the transition, and I understand Ms. Lovelace will speak to that important component.

I also am eager to hear from Max Stier on the recommendations of an exhaustive report prepared by the Partnership for Public Service entitled, *Ready to Govern*. Mr. Stier, I want to commend you for the time your organization invested in this report, and for the wide range of perspectives you solicited, both Democrat and Republican.

I am also interested to learn the witnesses' views on legislation introduced by Senator Edward Kaufman last week, the Pre-Election Presidential Transition Act. I am proud to join Senator Kaufman in cosponsoring this important legislation.

Lastly, I look forward to a discussion on improving the process for identifying, vetting, and confirming key administration personnel.

Several of the witnesses today will propose very ambitious goals for filling the Federal government's most critical positions. While I applaud these proposals, as a sponsor of the last comprehensive reform bill before this Committee I know this is a very tough nut to crack. But I am anxious to hear from the witnesses how we can move forward in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.