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Since 1988, the Prunes Project, has focused attention on the hardest management jobs in our government's Executive Branch. First housed at the Council for Excellence in Government (Council) and now at the National Academy of Public Administration (the National Academy) the Prunes Project is a signature series that goes far beyond providing a mere title and job description. These books give the White House and prospective nominees a hands-on view of the challenges ahead.

Twice, as part of this project, a "Survivor's Guide" was commissioned with the explicit purpose of telling newly appointed senior executives what they need to know to survive and thrive in the often challenging environment of Washington, D.C., a place where President Harry S Truman famously quipped, "If you want a friend, get a dog." Former Council Vice President John H. Trattner, author and editor of seven volumes in the Prune Book series between 1988 and 2004, also wrote the original *A Survivors' Guide for Government Executives: How to Succeed in Washington* in 1989 and enlisted Christopher Connell, a veteran journalist, to write a *Survivor's Guide* for Presidential Nominees in 2000, a book-length compendium of advice for those nominated by the President to senior positions in the Cabinet departments and agencies that require confirmation by the U.S. Senate. That *Survivor's Guide* was jointly sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government and by the Brookings Institution's Presidential Appointee Initiative, with generous support from The Pew Charitable Trusts. Dubbed "a classic in how Washington works" by Constance J. Horner, then a Brookings guest scholar and former White House personnel director, the public service Guide was distributed to appointees by the new Bush administration, and became a useful resource for journalists and for officials at the General Services Administration and elsewhere during and beyond the truncated 2000-2001 transition. The original Guide drew on extensive interviews of incumbent and former senior officials conducted by the Council for the 2000 Prune Book, as well as on materials from a survey of 435 officials from the Reagan, first Bush and Clinton administration conducted by the Presidential Appointee Initiative under the leadership of Paul C. Light,



then at Brookings and now the Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at New York University.

In 2008, with the nation fighting in prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and dealing with a daunting global financial crisis and continued threats to homeland security, and with no incumbent president or vice president on the ticket for the first time since 1952, the Prune Project recognized that an updated *Survivor's Guide* could be of great service to the new administration that took on these challenges as of noon on January 20, 2009. With the generous and enthusiastic support of Frank A. Weil, chairman of the New York investment firm of Abacus and Associates, Inc., and longtime member and former chairman of the board of directors of the Council for Excellence in Government, set out to make this happen with the newly updated *Survivor's Guide* that was published online as a companion to the electronic 2009 Prune Book, both available in their entirety online for the first time at no cost. Mr. Connell, a former assistant bureau chief for The Associated Press, was once again enlisted to research and revise this new, streamlined *Survivor's Guide*, which provides insights both from those interviewed for the original book and a new round of surveys for the online Prune Book.

It was an easy decision to go online for the new *Survivor's Guide* and Prune Book, which the National Academy now will be able to update and refresh constantly rather than waiting two, four or even eight years between new editions. The Prune Book, in particular, "is going to be a living, breathing, ongoing resource," instead of being frozen at a point in time, noted Weil, who once headed the International Trade Association at the U.S. Department of Commerce and coined the Prune Book name (a play on *The Plum Book* that lists all 7,000 jobs a president can fill). "This will give more light to the whole appointments process." Weil also supported the Prunes Online Steering Committee that undertook the task of narrowing down this list to the 100+ toughest jobs in government. The other Committee members were:

- Kenneth S. Apfel, former commissioner of Social Security and Professor of the Practice at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy
- Christopher Connell, former assistant bureau chief for the

Associated Press, a writer and consultant on the project

- G. Edward DeSeve, former deputy director for management of the Office of Management and Budget and director of the Management, Finance and Leadership Program at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy
- Tom Goodwin, former White House personnel officer and founder and president of the executive search firm, Goodwin & Company
- Frank Hodsoll, longtime public servant, lawyer and former chair of the National Endowment for the Arts and current chair of the Center for Arts and Culture at George Mason University
- Charles S. Ingersoll, Jr., former White House personnel official and leader of the Government Specialty Practice for the executive search firm Korn/Ferry International
- Edward R. Jayne, II, former associate director for national security at the Office of Management and Budget and international affairs and partner at the executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles
- John Koskinen, former deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget and president of the U.S. Soccer Foundation
- David Mader, former assistant deputy commissioner of the International Revenue Service and vice president of Booz Allen Hamilton
- Larry Matlack, former deputy associate director, Office of Management and Budget
- Arnold J. Miller, former White House personnel director and founder of Isaacson Miller, the national recruiting firm
- Charles Rossotti, former commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service and Senior Advisor at The Carlyle Group
- James Lee Witt, former director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and chairman and CEO of the crisis management firm James Lee Witt Associates, LLC.

INTRODUCTION



When the Phone Rings

The phone rings. It's the White House calling, or the transition office of the president-elect. "We're looking to fill a senior position in the new administration, and we understand that you're one of most knowledgeable people in this field. Are you interested?"

You're honored and flattered. You may have been on pins and needles waiting for this call, or it may have come out of the blue. Either way, there's a new president in town, and he wants you to take a job important enough to require Senate confirmation.

But should you?

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will pry into your personal and professional life and your finances will be bared in public. Months may pass before the White House makes up its mind and more months before the Senate confirms you. You may be left in the dark with your life on hold. Your nomination could get hung up or derailed for reasons that have nothing to do with your qualifications. The White House Office of Presidential Personnel put it bluntly in public advice to those who sought appointment the last time the presidency changed hands read:

To serve our country ... (is) both an honor and a privilege. However, government service is not for everyone. Anyone thinking about applying should be aware that:

- The hours are long and the pace intense.
- There is much public/press scrutiny, as you would expect in an open, democratic form of government such as ours.
- Most applicants under serious consideration for an appointment will go through a full FBI background check in which their employment, professional, personal, travel, medical, financial, legal, military and educational histories will be reviewed and scrutinized.



- The financial holdings and sources of income for most applicants under serious consideration must be disclosed for review for possible conflicts of interest, and any conflicts must be remedied by divestiture, the creation of special trusts, etc.
- Most appointees' dealings with the Federal government during and for a period of time after their service will be significantly restricted to prevent possible conflicts of interest.¹

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Still, many who have served in senior positions attest that these were the most exciting and rewarding days of their life, and whatever sacrifices they had to make and waits they had to endure, it was well worth it.

But that's what almost all say when their public service is over. For now, you have more questions than answers. You want to find out what this would mean for you, your family and your career after government. You want a guide through the maze of financial and personal disclosure forms and other steps on the confirmation process.

That's where *A Survivor's Guide for Presidential Nominees* comes in. This is the second edition of the Guide, originally published in November 2000 by the nonpartisan Council for Excellence in Government and the Brookings Institution. This updated Guide attempts to explain in plain English what every prospective nominee needs to know about taking one of the 600 full-time presidential appointments across the Executive Branch that require Senate confirmation. These are the approximately 350 top jobs in the 15 Cabinet departments (including Cabinet secretaries, deputy secretaries, under secretaries, assistant secretaries and general counsels), and 250 other positions in independent or regulatory agencies. Five hundred-plus other presidential appointees also require Senate confirmation, but these include part-time appointments to boards and commissions as well as appointments to be U.S. attorneys or U.S. marshals and ambassadorial appointments, which are beyond the scope of the Guide. Judgeships, too, are in a class of their own, with home state senators by tradition exerting more of a say than is customary for other nominations.

Some of the Guide's information may prove useful to presidential appointees whose jobs do not require Senate confirmation. But the special focus of the book is on those nominees who must first pass the White House's muster and then convince the U.S. Senate that they are worthy of high government office. A large majority of presidential nominees win confirmation without major difficulty.

The Burdens and Blessings of Public Service

Anyone taking on public service faces the nagging question of whether they really

want to put up with the hassles that come with government work. In every administration, some senior officials get themselves into hot water by violating the conflict-of-interest rules, which are complex and unforgiving.

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Why risk it?

There is important work to be done here. Those who answer the call to public service are following a noble tradition that can be traced back to the late 18th century when Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton helped guide policy as Cabinet secretaries during the presidency of George Washington. Presidential appointees have been a cornerstone of democracy ever since.

“I’ve never done anything as a lawyer in private practice as much fun as the 22 months I had in the White House,” said Arthur “A.B.” Culvahouse Jr., who was White House counsel to President Ronald Reagan. Todd Dickinson went through the confirmation process twice in the Clinton administration as deputy commissioner and then commissioner of patents and trademarks in the Commerce Department. His first confirmation was delayed while certain senators pressured the secretary of commerce to appoint people they wanted to regional fishery boards. He encountered an even longer delay when the patents commissioner left, and most of 1999 passed before the Senate finally confirmed him. Dickinson said, “It’s one of those processes that seems very frustrating when you’re in it, but after it’s done, it’s like finding a parking place. It’s extremely annoying as time goes by, but once you find that place, well, the pain dissipates.”

Getting nominated and confirmed is “one of those processes that seems very frustrating when you’re in it, but after it’s done, it’s like finding a parking place. It’s extremely annoying as time goes by, but once you find that place, well, the pain dissipates.”

Presidential appointments “come along only once in a lifetime for most people,” noted Dr. D. James Baker, under secretary of Commerce and administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Clinton administration.

Lee Sachs, assistant secretary of the Treasury for financial markets under Clinton, observes, “The quality of people that I’ve had a chance to work with – including [Treasury secretaries] Bob Rubin and Larry Summers – and the issues that I got to wrestle with, well, you can’t match that combination in the private sector.”

As difficult as the confirmation process can be, most nominees make it through unscathed. Bob J. Nash, former director of the White House Office of Presidential Personnel in the Clinton administration, made this observation: “Very few people ...

get to serve at the highest levels of government. Public service is one of the highest callings in the land. You have an opportunity to make a positive impact on families, communities, states, and sometimes the world.”

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Official duties aside, Washington offers rare pleasures and satisfactions to senior and even mid-level executives on the president’s team: invitations to White House receptions and the Easter Egg roll, perhaps a seat at a state dinner, concert or lecture in the East Room. There are embassy parties, performances at the Kennedy Center, galas at Smithsonian museums, fireworks and festivals on the Mall, and family nights at the National Zoo. Then there are more quiet pleasures, such as walking beneath the cherry blossoms in springtime. Washington can be a tough city; it can wreak havoc on family life with long, unforgiving hours. But it can also provide the experiences and memories of a lifetime, which explains why many who move to Washington never leave it.

We hope A Survivor’s Guide for Presidential Nominees will help you with that decision—and make the path smoother if you answer the call to service.