

## **TRANSITION: Obama fills key posts on environment, energy teams**

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President-elect Barack Obama filled out several key energy and environmental positions for his transition team Friday while also staffing up a few select White House jobs.

Obama named more than a dozen people to craft policy positions and monitor the Bush administration's efforts at U.S. EPA and the Agriculture, Energy, Interior and Transportation departments, with former Clinton Deputy Interior Secretary David Hayes in the overall lead of the transition's energy and natural resources team.

For the White House, Obama turned to one of his longest-running associates in Chicago, Valerie Jarrett, to be a senior adviser and assistant for intergovernmental relations. And Obama also will rely on several former Democratic Capitol Hill aides to serve in some of the highest positions surrounding the Oval Office.

Phil Schiliro, who has more than two decades of experience on Capitol Hill as a top aide to California Democratic Rep. Henry Waxman, will be the incoming administration's top lobbyist to Congress. Schiliro worked with Waxman, then chairman of the House Health and Environment Subcommittee, during the 1990 debate over the last major set of Clean Air Act amendments.

Obama's Senate chief of staff, Pete Rouse, will be a senior White House adviser. And Obama's deputy White House chiefs of staff will be former Clinton National Security Council member Mona Sutphen and Jim Messina, a former chief of staff to Montana Democratic Sen. Max Baucus and North Dakota Democratic Sen. Byron Dorgan.

Vice President-elect Joe Biden on Saturday also named Ron Klein to be his chief of staff. Klein held the same job for four years under former Vice President Al Gore, and he also has had senior roles for former Attorney General Janet Reno and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.).

Obama's fast-forming transition team will work over the next seven weeks to line up the incoming administration's many competing priorities, all of which are expected to revolve around economic recovery. In an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes" that aired last night, Obama said energy would remain a top priority early in his term, despite oil prices dipping below \$60 a barrel.

"It's more important," Obama said. "It may be a little harder politically, but it's more important."

Asked to explain why energy would remain a priority, he replied, "Well, because this has been our pattern. We go from shock to trance. You know, oil prices go up, gas prices at the pump go up, everybody goes into a flurry of activity. And then the prices go back down and suddenly we act like it's not important, and we start, you know, filling up our SUVs again. And, as a consequence, we never make any progress. It's part of the addiction, all right. That has to be broken. Now is the time to break it."

Global warming issues also could be on Obama's front burner come January, though it is unclear exactly how hard the incoming administration will push mandatory curbs on greenhouse gas emissions.

Today in Chicago, Obama meets for 90 minutes with the man he defeated in the presidential election, Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain. McCain has been a long-standing supporter of climate cap-and-trade legislation, prompting speculation that the issue may be one item that the two former rivals agree to team up on early next year.

## **CEQ, EPA, Energy and Interior**

As he builds his government, Obama is relying on several former high-ranking Clinton administration officials in dealing with energy and environmental issues.

For example, George Frampton is co-chairman of the Obama transition team for the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Frampton ran CEQ under Clinton from 1998 to 2001 and before that served as assistant secretary of the Interior Department.

Since 2001, Frampton has worked in New York as a partner at Boies, Schiller & Flexner. Frampton's earlier jobs include president of the Wilderness Society, deputy director of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's investigation of the Three Mile Island accident and assistant special prosecutor for Watergate Special Prosecution Force.

Also leading Obama's CEQ transition team is Thomas Soto, a Clinton-era appointee to the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, a panel established under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Since leaving government, Soto co-founded Craton Equity Partners, a Southern California clean technology investment firm. And he also worked for seven years as vice chairman of the California State Board of Corrections as an appointee of former Democratic Gov. Gray Davis.

At EPA, Obama's transition team includes Cecilia Estolano, a former Clinton-era senior policy adviser in the Office of Air and Radiation who now works as the CEO of Los Angeles' Community Redevelopment Agency. The other EPA co-chairs include Robert Sussman, a former deputy EPA administrator during the first two years of the Clinton administration, and Lisa Jackson, the current director of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Sussman, 61, retired this year after a decade running Latham & Watkins' environmental practice in Washington. He is also a senior fellow at the liberal Center for American Progress.

Jackson, 46, an engineer, is the first African-American woman to run New Jersey's environmental office. She also worked at EPA from 1987 to 2002, both in its headquarters and at its New York City regional offices. Last month, New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine (D) asked Jackson to become his chief of staff, a job that is supposed to start Dec. 1.

Obama's Energy Department transition team starts with team leader Elgie Holstein, who served as Clinton's assistant secretary of Commerce for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and also held important energy-related positions in the Office of Management and Budget, DOE and the National Economic Council.

Under Clinton, Holstein was responsible for electric utility restructuring, oil and gas issues and community "right-to-know" environmental proposals. Holstein has worked as an independent energy consultant since the end of the Clinton administration. During Obama's presidential campaign, he was a senior energy policy adviser to the Illinois senator.

Holstein's support team includes Elizabeth Montoya -- a consultant with Sealaska Corp. on human resource management and a former Clinton White House personnel director at the White House and DOE, and Sue Tierney, a managing principal on electricity and gas issues at Analysis Group and a former assistant secretary for policy at DOE under Clinton.

Rose McKinney-James will head up the transition team for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, an independent agency under DOE.

McKinney-James presides over her own energy consulting company and is the head of the Corporation for Solar Technology and Renewable Resources, the nonprofit corporation funded through DOE. She also has been the chairwoman of the Nevada Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Task Force, where she worked with current FERC Commissioner Jon Wellinghoff to champion the issues of solar, efficiency and other green power sources.

At the Interior Department, Obama's transition is being overseen by John Leshy, who served as Interior's solicitor throughout the Clinton administration, and Keith Harper, one of the most influential Native American litigators.

Before taking the transition job, Leshy predicted during an environmental conference last year that the next administration would bring increased interest in rebuilding an "activist government" with more attention given to science.

"I think we need to rebuild government's natural resource management, and I think that we'll begin to move in that direction," Leshy said.

Leshy is now a professor at the University of California's Hastings College of the Law. Previously, he worked for former House Resources Chairman George Miller (D-Calif.), the Natural Resources Defense Council in California and the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

Harper brings experience on Native American issues to Obama's Interior transition team. A member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Harper has represented the plaintiffs in *Cobell v. Kempthorne* since the inception of the case. The class-action lawsuit against the Interior Department spans decades of mismanagement of multibillion-dollar Indian trust fund accounts.

He also chairs the Native American Practice Group at Kilpatrick Stockton LLP and previously served as head of the Washington office of the Native American Rights Fund.

## **Transportation and Agriculture**

Overseeing Obama's transition at the Department of Transportation will be three veterans who previously held top posts in the department during the Clinton administration.

Mortimer Downey, DOT deputy secretary and chief operating officer under Clinton, is the team leader. He also oversaw the DOT budget as one of the agency's assistant secretaries during the Carter administration. During Obama's presidential campaign, Downey served as senior transportation policy adviser. He has spoken of the need for heavy investment in the nation's roads and railways ([E&E Daily](#), Nov. 6).

Joining Downey is Jane Garvey, who became the first-ever woman to be appointed administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, and Michael Huerta, who has held a number of senior positions in DOT, including department chief of staff.

In addition to their bureaucratic experience, Garvey and Huerta will bring the perspective of private industry to the team, with a focus on road pricing. Garvey currently heads JPMorgan's public-private partnership group, and Huerta is president of a consulting firm that specializes in electronic toll collection.

Obama's picks to lead the Agriculture Department transition -- Bart Chilton and Carole Jett -- each have expertise in energy and conservation issues.

Bart Chilton has a long history on agriculture issues, most recently focusing on markets for farm and energy commodities. He currently serves as one of five commissioners of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Chilton, a Democrat, has criticized recent CFTC reports and said the agency should have more authority to regulate problems in some markets.

President Bush appointed Chilton to CFTC in 2007 to the Farm Credit Administration before that. Chilton was also a Clinton appointee to the Agriculture Department in the late 1990s, serving as deputy chief of staff for Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman. Between his appointed positions, he worked on agriculture and transportation issues for Sen. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and on government relations for the National Farmers Union.

Chilton has also previously served on the board of directors of Bion Environmental Technologies and the Association of Family Farms. He lives on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

The other USDA team leader is Carole Jett, who has a long history in farmland conservation issues. Jett worked on agriculture issues for the Obama campaign in Indiana. Before that, she worked in the federal government for 33 years, most recently as farm bill coordinator for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS oversees almost all of the billions of dollars in farmland conservation programs each year.

Jett was the NRCS point person for the 2002 farm bill and played a critical role in the USDA-EPA strategy on animal feeding operations, according to the Obama campaign. She recently launched a new conservation policy consulting group, Blackwood's Group. She donated \$4,620 to Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaign and \$1,217 to the Obama campaign, in addition to other Democratic campaign contributions in Indiana.

At the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Obama tapped Mario Molina, a University of California, San Diego, academic who won the Nobel Prize in 1995 for chemistry. Molina has researched sustainable growth, how to combat air pollution and threats from man-made chemicals to the ozone layer.

*Staff writers Kate Ling, Noelle Straub, Allison Winter and Josh Voorhees contributed.*