

Elections 2008: What the Elections Mean, and What to Do Next

There will be many people who spend time reviewing the elections of 2008 – and there is some good to be gained out of such reflection. The truth, though, is that the outcome was consistent with political tradition. Checkbook issues are the primary factor in presidential elections. And an unhappy electorate is a huge obstacle for the party in control of the White House.

It is football season, so a football analogy is appropriate. It is amazing that the defending champions, playing on a field against the wind and with the sun in their eyes, led by an aging quarterback with very little depth, an old playbook and no cheerleaders, even stayed in the game.

President-elect Obama is youthful, energetic and a talented communicator. For an electorate ready to support changes, he was simply more credible on reform than a veteran of more than three decades in the Congress who is out of touch with the way Americans under 40 communicate and learn.

So where does that put recreation, and the recreation industry?

Surprisingly well off. If the Obama presidency will be about change and American jobs, a \$500 billion industry with large numbers of genuine American manufacturing jobs, lots of young employees and a real potential for helping to produce a happier, healthier and more educated America can be a “go-to” force.

Our challenge will be to articulate popular new programs and policies that can achieve visible results quickly. What kinds of programs? For one – a major expansion of national service efforts in the great outdoors, with more educational stipends than the current AmeriCorps. One of the goals of this new program might be a big jump ahead in “safe routes to school” efforts and urban trails that provide safe alternatives to use of cars for local errands and promote health. And let’s not rule out expansion of efforts to free up credit for car and home purchases to credit for purchasing American-made RVs and boats.

Over the next 90 days, we will be reporting to recreation community leaders about the insider efforts of the new Administration and the new Congress every Monday. The Obama Administration Transition effort begins today. A big part of its focus is the **United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)** – a guide to nearly 8,000 federal jobs which are filled non-competitively by the new Administration, including 1,100 requiring Senate confirmation. And the Transition will also be sifting through

white papers and proposals from agencies and special interests advocating candidates for the "First 100 Days" agenda.

We know many of the Obama Transition Team members, under the leadership of **John Podesta**, former Chief of Staff in the Clinton White House. Other big players are **Cassandra Butts** (Harvard Law classmate), **Tom Daschle** and **Rahm Emanuel** (former Clinton White House official and now U.S. Representative from Illinois).

As far as the next Secretary of the Interior, we are beginning to hear names – but it is still very early. Among those to watch:

- ◆ Montana Governor **Brian Schweitzer**, is a farmer and rancher who held no elected office prior to being elected as the first Democratic Governor to serve Montana in 20 years.
- ◆ U.S. Representative **Jay Inslee** (D-WA), a major player on roadless areas in national forests and active on energy policy matters and the global climate change debate.
- ◆ Colorado Governor **Bill Ritter, Jr.**, elected in 2006 and focused on a more sustainable national energy portfolio , business development, and building a New Energy Economy for Colorado and the nation's future.
- ◆ Wyoming Governor **Dave Freudenthal**, elected in 2002 and very popular in a traditionally Republican state.
- ◆ And a wild card – U.S. Representative **George Miller** (D-CA)

Note that there are no Senators on the list. Because of Senate rules that allow filibustering, putting any D seat there into play is perceived as risky. And besides – two Senators are already moving into the top jobs of the Administration!

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