

## ***Monday Morning Washington Update – November 10, 2008***

Less than a week after the Presidential election of 2008, the national mood seems clear: **“Somebody get the economy fixed – quickly!”** And that certainly seems to be the focus of President-elect Barack Obama.

That said, getting anything done in Washington is a challenge and we don't know today whether the Congress will really meet in a lame duck session next week and address any significant issues. But there are some important observations to share.

First, the ***Obama campaign was marked by discipline and good strategic planning***, and we expect the same during the transition process. This weekend, the transition leaders and newly-announced White House Chief of Staff all spoke publicly from the same card: ***economy is #1, followed by energy and international relations***, including Iraq and Afghanistan and Iran. After that – health care and education. And then – everything else.

What I think we can safely say is that the “everything else” can't cost much money or consume much political capital, and will be measured against the higher order priorities like the economy.

There are a few additional 40,000-foot observations that we'd like to share:

1) It seems everybody inside the Beltway and around the nation couldn't wait for the 2008 elections to conclude. One key indication: the huge increase in early voting.

2) ***The 2008 Presidential election offered a dramatic validation of America's true leadership in the world on human rights and freedom – the ability to rise to top positions in government and industry regardless of race or economic background.*** Just 45 years ago, Martin Luther King spoke on the Mall about his dream – before a nation where segregation was still in evidence in some areas. And the newly elected President embraces key traditional American values: a caring family, the importance of a good education and reward for hard work. And the new first couple shows a dedication to a core traditional American value: putting a priority on children.

3) ***The new President will face immense pressure to keep a newly energized group of voters engaged.*** He is likely to rely heavily on new communications – as his campaign did. Like President Reagan, he will attempt to escape reliance on the traditional media and use his communications skills to promote his priorities as a way to lessen disappointments that some issues – potentially divisive issues – will be delayed.

4) ***Tax issues will be tough for the new President.*** While some reductions for the “middle class” will be enacted, higher taxes on anybody will be hard to enact while the economy is down and when a enlarged group of ***50+ Blue Dog Democrats – conservative fiscally***, and in districts that could be in play in 2010 – are making it clear that they intend to be part of the Democratic leadership.

5) While public lands issues are likely to be pretty low-profile, the chances are very high that the environment will be given some Presidential focus. Every name that has been floated to date represents a much more activist role at EPA – Robert Kennedy Jr, Carol Browner, Katie McGinty. **Message to the recreation community: it's time to make green a synonym with recreation community efforts.**

As we prepare for an unusually busy pre-Inaugural period, there are key messages we need to use and refine. **The first is American jobs.** The auto industry has achieved the support of the incoming Administration by demonstrating the consequences of major loss of sales and market share by the Big Three. **We need to do the same – gaining appreciation for the jobs involved in manufacturing RVs and boats and in the entire recreation industry.**

We also need to develop a new call for **using the nation's Great Outdoors to benefit all Americans** – and not primarily regarding food, fuel and fiber. We need to increase our advocacy of our public lands as critical to improvements in healthcare and our educational system, and to the economic sustainability of thousands of communities across the nation. And we expect a focus on close-to-home lands, and lands along the coasts, and less on Wilderness and remote public lands.

The recreation community begins its active campaign for time in the spotlight today, as **ARC's Recreation Exchange meets one block from the White House while President Bush and President-elect Obama are meeting in the Oval Office. We have gathered four key guests – experienced in and out of government and with clear plans and opportunities to be engaged in the transition process. They will share what they expect to see as the new Administration takes shape: names and issues and key themes.** We will hear what they heard during the campaign, and how they expect public lands, wildlife, recreation and health and more will fare. We have asked them to share their views on how much funding and focus the new Administration might be persuaded to put on parks, refuges, greenways, trails and more after a campaign that put emphasis on the economy, energy and Iraq. We'll be sharing a summary of this information mid-week.

Stay tuned – and stay engaged. Regardless of your feelings about the outcome of the election, key decisions regarding the future of recreation and the recreation industry will be made over the next four years, and your input is vital.

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