

# Executive Summary

## The slow race to confirmation

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It seems as if President Barack Obama is getting a late jump in filling his senior political posts across government.

After a little more than two months on the job, Obama has only 38 Senate-confirmed appointees in place. All but four Cabinet departments are running with only the secretary in place. At our press time late last week, one department — Health and Human Services — didn't even have that.

But everything's relative, as they say. And compared with his predecessor, Obama is actually doing pretty well. In the first 65 days of his new administration, President George W. Bush had 30 appointees confirmed, according to the White House Transition Project's Web site, [whitehousetransitionproject.org](http://whitehousetransitionproject.org).

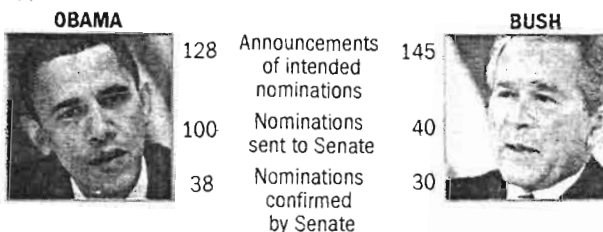
The biggest difference between the two administrations has been in how fast they've sent formal nominations to the Senate for confirmation. Bush had sent 40 at this point in his administration, while Obama has sent 100, according to the Project.

Terry Sullivan, the Project's executive director and a political science professor at the University of North Carolina, said Obama's team has been vetting nominees faster than Bush's team, even though it vastly increased the amount of personal and financial information it seeks from its nominees. The Obama team's personal data statement questionnaire, known as "the scare document," asks potential nominees 63 questions. That compares with 19 questions asked by the Bush transition team.

One thing to watch for, Sullivan said, is how many appointees Obama gets confirmed in his first 100 days. He guesses that the Obama team is reaching for a goal of 100

### OBAMA VS. BUSH

President Barack Obama is so far outpacing his predecessor, George W. Bush, in sending nominations to the Senate for political appointments.\*



### MEN VS. WOMEN

Nominations and Senate confirmations take longer for female political appointees than for men: \*\*



	NUMBER OF DAYS		
	From White House announcement to nomination sent to the Senate	From the Senate receiving the nomination to Senate confirmation	Total
Male	15.6	17.3	42.7
Female	25.9	26.2	61.5

\* As of first 65 days in office

\*\*Numbers reflect only Obama nominees. Comparable data for Bush nominees are not available.

SOURCE: White House Transition Project

GRAPHIC BY BRYAN SMITH

confirmed appointees by then. That would significantly outpace previous recent administrations: George W. Bush had 35 confirmed in 100 days, Bill Clinton had 49, George H.W. Bush had 49, and Ronald Reagan had 83.

Here's a curious revelation about the Obama transition data collected so far: Women appointees take about 50 percent longer to be vetted by the White House and confirmed by the Senate than do their male counterparts.

"I have no explanation for it," Sullivan said. "We're just now beginning to take notice of it."

One possible explanation, he said, is that the business and professional lives of the spouses of nominees get scrutinized as well. And the spouses of female nominees may have more complex business and professional lives than do the spouses of male nominees. ■

### Arbitrator: EEOC owes employees overtime

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission required some employers to work overtime without pay over the last six years, a violation of labor law, an arbitrator ruled last week.

EEOC gave those employers — investigators, reporters and paralegals — compensatory time off, but arbitrator Steven Wolf ruled EEOC should have allowed most of them to choose between time off and overtime pay. Wolf plans another hearing to determine much EEOC will have to pay the employees.

Acting EEOC Chair Stuart Ishimaru proposed policies. "We want to get overtime right," he said. The ruling was released March 26.

The union that filed the grievance in 2006 has the decision. The ruling vindicates the employees' should not be exploiting the dedicated hardworking employees," said Gabrielle, president of the National Council of EEOC. Wolf's decision covers all employees who worked overtime.

### GAO identifies fraud in HUBZone contracts

There is widespread fraud in the Small Business Administration's Underutilized Economic Zone (HUBZone) program. The Government Accountability Office has

In a review of 25 contracts awarded in cities, GAO found firms claiming to be Zone-eligible did not have the qualifications for the program that is meant to help small businesses in economically distressed areas. The GAO didn't have their offices in HUBZone didn't hire a certain percentage of employees lived in the HUBZone.

The result: The GAO found more than \$30 million in contracts in 2008. SBA told GAO that engineering the H

### WHAT'S AHEAD

#### Sebelius hearing

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius goes before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee on March 31 to discuss her nomination as Health and Human Services secretary. The committee will vote on the nomination April 1.

#### Measuring acquisition

The defense acquisition reform panel of the House Armed Services Committee meets April 1 in Washington to assess the performance of the Defense Department's acquisition system.

<http://armedservices.house.gov>

#### VA confirmations

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee meets April 1 to consider the nominations of Scott Gould as deputy secretary of the Veterans Affairs Department and Tammy Duckworth as assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs.

<http://veterans.senate.gov>

#### Dangerous buildings

The House Administration Committee on April 1 probes recent reports of dangerous workplace conditions, including asbestos contamination, in Smithsonian Institution buildings.

<http://cha.house.gov/>