

# **Preparing for the Presidential Transition: Critical Issues, Essential Steps**

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## **Preparing for the Presidential Transition: Critical Issues, Essential Steps**

In the 1970 movie classic Patton, two soldiers in General George Patton's army, rushing forward to capture Berlin, have stopped their tank to puzzle over where they are and where to head next. "This place isn't on the map," one soldier says. "You know why?" the other replies. "We've run clear off the map."

### ***The Financial Crisis***

This is precisely the situation the president we elect on November 4 will find. September's financial meltdown is leading to the largest and most fundamental redefinition of the role of government since the 1930s. In important ways, our situation today is far more complex than what Franklin D. Roosevelt faced after the 1932 election.

- *Dynamic problems.* For Roosevelt, the stock market crash had occurred three years before and the problems had ripened. For the president we elect in 2008, the problems are continuing to emerge and change. Roosevelt was not trying to rebuild a system in the middle of the meltdown. The new president will need a clear understanding of the policy issues and a crisp strategy for action, aggressively followed and clearly explained.
- *Fast pace.* For Roosevelt, the pace of change was comparatively measured. For the president we elect in 2008, the 24-hour news cycle provides little time for reflection. Financial markets move not in reaction to policy decisions but in anticipation of the next policy move and market shift. The new president will need to move fast with sure steps.
- *International pressures.* For Roosevelt, the Great Depression had international roots and America's problems created international fallout. For the president we elect in 2008, however, the instantaneous international rebound gives an immediate report card on any policy decision. The new president will need to build a strong international consensus, and engender global support, to ensure that international cross-pressures do not undermine his strategy.
- *Institutional transformation.* For Roosevelt, his New Deal initiatives redefined government's role and created new governmental structures. For the president we elect in 2008, there will not only be a fundamental redefinition of government's role. We are now moving even farther, to broaden government's role and to strengthen its institutions. The new president will need to confidently lead the nation into this new era and to effectively manage these new institutions. These are very big, very broad, very critical, and very new challenges.

Managing the vast complexities of the financial bailout has now pushed everything else aside. This will be the single most important challenge facing the new president.

## ***Other Issues***

Beyond the financial meltdown is a series of other important challenges.<sup>1</sup> Consider these critical issues in particular:

- *Homeland security*, including the need to protect the nation from any attempt by terrorists to use uncertainties in the transition to launch an attack. Moreover, Mother Nature pays no attention to the calendar, and natural disasters can threaten at any time. This is the first transition for the new Department of Homeland Security, and the need for careful planning to ensure a seamless transition is especially great.<sup>2</sup>
- *National defense*, including the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The nation faces critical months ahead in continuing the transition of security responsibilities to Iraqi forces, reconstructing critical infrastructure in Iraq, and seeking to stabilize Afghanistan. Everyone involved in those two nations will be looking for signs of future policy decisions and some forces will be seeking to take advantage of the transition to destabilize the efforts.
- *The nation's decennial census*, which shapes everything from the distribution of federal dollars to the redrawing of congressional districts. Field tests of new technological systems to support the census count will begin in the spring of 2009. The Census Bureau has already encountered serious problems with its systems, which has prompted the Government Accountability Office to include the census on its "high-risk list" of federal programs especially prone to waste and mismanagement.
- *Caring for wounded warriors*, especially those returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of wounded soldiers are returning from service, and subtle injuries are certain to service in the years to come among tens of thousands of other veterans. The Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs health care and benefits system need substantial transformation to deal with the care our wounded warriors unquestionably deserve.<sup>3</sup>
- *The federal budget*, which will now be saddled with perhaps a trillion dollars of new debt and with economic worries that will overhang fiscal planning. Big issues that were already posing enormous challenges for the federal budget—the expiring tax cuts, the difficulty of untangling the alternative minimum tax, rising entitlements (especially in the Medicare and Medicaid programs), and the looking costs of the Baby Boomers' retirement—will compound the fresh challenges of the mortgage meltdown.

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<sup>1</sup> For analysis, see National Academy of Public Administration, *Presidential Management Capacity to Respond to 21st Century Challenges*, at <http://www.napawash.org/pmc/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> See National Academy of Public Administration, *Addressing the 2009 Presidential Transition at the Department of Homeland Security* (Washington: National Academy of Public Administration, 2008), at [http://www.napawash.org/pc\\_management\\_studies/DHS/DHSExecutiveStaffingReport2008.pdf](http://www.napawash.org/pc_management_studies/DHS/DHSExecutiveStaffingReport2008.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Academy of Public Administration, *Beyond the Yellow Ribbons: Building a Veteran-Centered System* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Public Administration, 2008).

Transitions are always times of great excitement and great risk. What was certain already to be a transition of great challenge has now become the most important and most difficult presidential transition in 75 years, since 1933. The issues loom large. The intellectual capital for charting a new strategy is low. We have, in fact, run clear off the map. In the appendix at the end of this testimony, drawn from my forthcoming book, *The Next Government of the United States*, I explore many of these broader issues in more detail.

## ***Steps for Effective Transition***

That makes it all the more important for the next president to chart a strategy that ensures a smooth and effective transition. Let me outline the steps that the next president must take and how Congress can best support them.

1. *Begin early.* The issues are so important that the candidates must ensure that their transition efforts are underway long before the election. This can create political problems, since critics might suggest that the candidates are being too presumptuous. But it is the height of irresponsibility *not* to plan the candidates' strategies and tactics for tackling these issues long before election day. Waiting until mid-November to start would expose the nation to enormous and unnecessary risks. In fact, it is critical for each candidate to describe how he would exercise his constitutional obligation as chief executive and ensure his oath of office to "faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States." A public discussion of these issues would greatly benefit the campaign. At the very least, thorough planning for the transition ought to be protected from political attack. Everyone touching the political process ought to demand a public discussion of how candidates would govern and ought to do everything possible to make such discussion politically safe. Indeed, it would show the utmost irresponsibility if the candidates were not now planning for how to fulfill the oath of office. The new president needs to be prepared to govern effectively, starting at noon on January 20, 2009.
  - The incoming administration must have a transition planning operation in place now to ensure that all the other necessary steps can begin as soon as the election's results are known.
  - Congress should join everyone else in the political system to support this effort.
  
2. *Plan for fast-track confirmation.* The burdens of sorting through positions, identifying appointees, preparing disclosure statements, and securing congressional confirmation can leave a new administration without its top leaders for many months. The White House Personnel Office has identified the 100 most important appointed positions and has outlined a strategy for getting them confirmed by April 1—followed by the next 300 appointees by August 1. It is a sign of the complexity of the process that it takes so long. It is also a sign of our sluggish efforts to reform the system, including simplifying the financial disclosure form and reducing the number of positions that require full Senate confirmation. But despite these continuing roadblocks:
  - The incoming administration should plan for fast-track confirmations: identifying the mission-critical positions; recruiting candidates for these positions first;

providing assistance in completing the confirmation paperwork; and working with Congress in streamlining the confirmation process.

- The Senate should work closely with the incoming administration to ensure a thorough but rapid confirmation of individuals nominated for such mission-critical positions.

3. *Prepare the team to lead.* The new president's first job is building the team who will help him manage the government. He must staff the White House and appoint the members of his cabinet. He must fill more than 1,600 policy-making Schedule C positions and deal with thousands of other political appointments—all while dealing with tens of thousands of applicants sure to be disappointed. Most important, he must prepare the team to lead.

- The incoming administration should create a systematic program to provide its political appointees with the job skills required for success in senior government positions, as outlined in invaluable guides like the new *The Presidential Appointees Handbook*.<sup>4</sup> The program should begin with the first appointees and continue through the following years, in part to help appointees deal with the ongoing challenges of their positions and in part to help new appointees who assume office in the midst of the term to hit the ground running.
- Congress should supply the modest appropriation required to support this effort.

4. *Build the budget.* From the moment the celebration confetti meets the broom and dustpan, the clock is ticking on the new president's budget. The president-elect has just weeks to put together his new budget and, with the budget, put his stamp on new priorities and existing programs. There are, of course, other opportunities to introduce new plans and only rarely is the budget passed on time. But the introduction of the budget is an important event, for both policy substance and political theater. The president's first budget will shape activity until nearly the end of his second year in office, so grabbing these reins is an important part of the transition. That will be all the more important this year, with the Congressional Budget Office projecting that the deficit will more than double from \$171 billion in fiscal year 2007 to \$407 billion in 2008; with most of the government operating without a regular budget; and with major budget issues on the table: the cost wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the decision about whether to extend the tax cuts scheduled to expire in 2010, and a fix for the alternative minimum tax which is drawing in more taxpayers every year. The cost of the financial bailout will swamp even these numbers. That makes the president-elect's transition decisions about the FY2010 budget all the more important.

- The incoming administration should assemble its financial team as its first order of business after building the president's personal staff. The financial team must move quickly to establish a long-term plan to deal not only with the nation's long-run fiscal problems but also with the immediate financial crisis.

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<sup>4</sup> G. Edward DeSeve, *The Presidential Appointees Handbook* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

- Congress should act expeditiously on the coming year’s budget to provide the financial markets with additional assurance about the nation’s fiscal health.
5. *Change = results.* The two presidential campaigns have focused their efforts on change. As the financial crisis makes inescapably clear, change is more than ideas or rhetoric. Making change stick requires achieving results. For the new administration, the most important results will lie in reinforcing the nation’s financial security.
- The incoming administration should focus its efforts on moving aggressively from ideas to results. This means managing the transformation of financial policy outlined earlier—and building the next generation of reform outlined in the appendix below.
  - Congress should focus its efforts and energy on reinforcing the pursuit of results, from effective use of its own tool, the Government Performance and Results Act, to ensuring effective oversight of government programs.

## **Appendix**

### **An Action Plan for the Next Government of the United States**

#### **Donald F. Kettl**

from  
*The Next Government of the United States:  
 Why Our Institutions Fail Us and How to Fix Them*  
 (New York: W.W. Norton, forthcoming © 2008)

American government is at a turning point. More of the same government is likely to produce more of the same unacceptable results. What we need is a fresh, even revolutionary approach to governance. What should be the action plan for this approach—to the next government of the United States?

As this book has shown, we have been here before: critical points in American history at which old ideas have run out of gas and where new reforms have been needed to replace them. Reform 5.0, which dominated American government since the beginning of the Reagan administration, is no longer up to the big challenges we face, as both the Mildred and Katrina cases have shown. American government needs the next generation of reform—a fresh, even revolutionary, Reform 6.0 strategy. In previous tectonic shifts, the reform path was clearer. There were big ideas—ideological, pragmatic, and theoretical—to guide reformers. With the natural end of Reform 5.0, however, the problems are big, but there is no map for the next stage. Without a new Reform 6.0 strategy, American government is doomed to be mired in more disappointing Katrina-style results. It’s time now to develop the plan for Reform 6.0, the *next* government of the United States.

The action plan must begin by charting what reformers should *not* do. As Katrina showed, the biggest risks come from charging blindly down the wrong road. Indeed, the initial step in Reform 6.0 is a Hippocratic Oath for governance: first, do no harm. The second step is avoiding the temptation to promise sweeping symbolic changes that, at best, produce only a quick flash and no lasting results—and, at worst, create mischief that will only make the problems worse. For example, reformers regularly pledge to eliminate the unholy trinity of waste, fraud, and abuse. There surely is waste, fraud, and abuse in public programs, and government needs to relentlessly root it out. But that can't be the plan for Reform 6.0, because it wouldn't get at the core problems. It is tempting to promise cuts in earmarks and narrow spending programs without a broad public purpose, but that won't produce substantial budget savings or attack the underlying governance problems. It is tempting to juggle organization charts, but as this book shows, the core issues aren't fundamentally structural. More transparency will help, but opening the window wider won't help if what is inside doesn't work any better. Moreover, Reform 6.0 shouldn't toss away the best efforts of Reforms 4.0 and 5.0, especially the Clinton and Bush tactics of bringing improved citizen service to a leaner government. The government needs to push public officials to define goals and improve outcomes, so more of this approach would move us in the right direction.

But none of these tactics can be the core of Reform 6.0. Some of them might help, but none of them will solve the core problems. If we use old reforms to attack new problems, we will surely fall short.

What *should* Reform 6.0 look like? As I concluded in Chapters 6 and 7, America needs *rocket science leaders* to take the nation to the next level. It needs a *government of transformation and collaboration* to grow these rocket science leaders and to ensure they have what they need to work effectively.<sup>5</sup> Much—perhaps most—of government is not a vending machine into which citizens insert taxpayers and government officials dispense goods and services. It is increasingly a system in which government officials must leverage the activities of partners, some governmental and many not, toward public purposes. Many local government social workers do not do social work; instead, they manage contractors who do much of the work with the young and elderly who receive public help. Most state transportation department officials do not build roads but work with federal and local partners to design transportation systems, and work with private contractors who do most of the actual construction. Most federal EPA workers do not themselves clean the environment but, rather, work through state officials who administer many of the environmental regulations and through contractors who clean up toxic waste sites.

Government needs to redefine its role. Government, and only government, can leverage complex partnerships to achieve public goals. It needs *transformation* to create and lead these partnerships and to ensure the public interest is paramount. And government needs *collaboration* to build the networks that can get the job done.

To produce this Reform 6.0, government must focus squarely on results. We need to provide citizens with effective, efficient, and responsive programs, in the manner that this book's rocket scientists do. Accountability built on last-generation procedures would serve twenty-first-century government as well as a Model T would serve interstate highway travelers. At best, the trip would be slow, bumpy, and unpleasant. At worst, we might not get where we're going. We need Reform 6.0, built on five balanced elements.

1. *Focus on results.* Citizens care little about government's organizational building blocks. They don't really care about the Federal Aviation Administration or the Food and Drug Administration

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<sup>5</sup> For an exploration of the process of transforming government agencies, see James E. Kee and Kathryn Newcomer, *Transforming Public and Nonprofit Organizations: Stewardship for Leading Change* (Vienna, VA: Management Concepts, 2008).

per se. They want to be able to get on a plane and arrive safely at their destination. They want to shop for food and eat it safely. Producing results that matter to people, and that do not focus narrowly on managing government agencies, must lie at the core of Reform 6.0. This, in fact, is the central lesson of Katrina. FEMA's efforts failed because the agency's leaders tried to solve big problems by managing them within the agency's borders, instead of FEMA working to bring together the capacity, based in many agencies, needed to help the storm's victims.

Moreover, the fundamental realities of the Mildred paradox—that government funds many services without itself providing them—and of the Mildred corollary—that many services depend on complex networks in which no one is in charge—means that trying to solve problems simply by managing agencies is a fool's errand. Successful government increasingly depends on building and managing networks, and successful networks emerge only when their members share a common vision of the results they are trying to produce. *We need to put the pursuit of outcomes at the center of the government's work.* That means agency managers must see their job as getting the job done—of looking past the boundaries of their agencies to accomplish the broad mission, rather than simply managing the more narrow activities within their agency's walls.

This step will be critical throughout government, for as we have seen in this book, no single agency can control any program or fully shape any outcome that matters. Federal transportation officials do not just distribute grants and administer regulations. They seek a transportation system that moves people and goods smoothly and that minimizes congestion and hassle. Federal labor officials do not just run job training programs, but try to use the federal government's leverage to promote job growth and safe workplaces. No agency can successfully do what must be done if it tries to do it alone. Focusing narrowly on an individual agency's processes only blinds it to the broader results that matter most and cripples its ability to build the partnerships it needs.

2. *Develop place-based performance measures.* State and local governments, especially in Baltimore and New York, have demonstrated that real-time, place-based, performance-driven systems can help them drive public programs to effective results.<sup>6</sup> As Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, who created Baltimore's CitiStat process as the city's mayor, explained, there are four key steps: "timely, accurate information, shared by all; rapid deployment of resources, so that we can respond in real time; effective tactics and strategies; and relentless follow-up and assessment."<sup>7</sup> This approach has led to the creation of new systems for tracking problems (such as the occurrence of crimes or the accumulation of storm-sewage problems), identifying the location by neighborhood, and developing cross-agency, neighborhood-based responses. The strategy transformed Baltimore's service systems. If the recurring problem of Reform 5.0 is the inability of agencies to leverage results for actions that lie outside their boundaries, the great promise of Reform 6.0 is to use place-based and citizen-based service systems to build the coordination mechanisms we need. This local government approach has spilled over to the state level, including Maryland. At the federal level, the EPA has begun charting quarterly performance measures on maps that show the progress being made toward a cleaner environment.

Focusing on results that matter to citizens, and then integrating the functional components of government's activities so that they work effectively for people where they live and work, are the core elements of Reform 6.0 practice. The next-generation performance measures need to build on the Clinton

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<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of these systems, see Robert D. Behn, *What All Mayors Would Like to Know About Baltimore's CitiStat Performance Strategy* (Washington, DC: IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2007), at [www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/BehnReportCiti.pdf](http://www.businessofgovernment.org/pdfs/BehnReportCiti.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See Governor Martin O'Malley's testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, and International Security, for the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (July 24, 2008), at [http://hsgac.senate.gov/public\\_files/OMalleyTestimony.pdf](http://hsgac.senate.gov/public_files/OMalleyTestimony.pdf).

and Bush efforts by creating better data on outcomes—the results produced—instead of just activities—the things that agencies do. They also need to bring national policies to sharp reality in communities by linking agencies that share a contribution to solving a particular problem, and by bringing together the data that bear on each community. *We need to focus on outcomes to drive collaboration across functional boundaries if we are to produce the results citizens expect.* Local governments could overlay the locations of their schools and the placement of their recreation and nutrition centers to improve the coordination of services for children. State governments could link the location of Medicaid recipients with the location of senior centers and transportation programs to help seniors. The federal government could even further strengthen its mapping of public health problems, including disease outbreaks, with the programs designed to counter them. We need to manage our problems through functionally organized agencies. We need to solve our problems in the communities where people live. Reform 6.0 must provide a powerful mechanism for linking functions with places and people.

3. *Create rocket science leaders.* The lessons of government’s rocket scientists—the leaders who have found ways to make transformation and collaboration work—is that they *are* leaders. They have discovered how to bring together the resources they have available to them to solve the problems people care about. The good news is that the government has produced so many rocket science leaders. The bad news is that, except for a handful of agencies such as the Coast Guard, the process for producing these leaders has been haphazard. To make government work, we have had to rely too much on the leaders’ own drive to solve the problems we all face. We have not worked hard enough to develop a system to produce a steady stream of such leaders. Thus, when big crises arise and when big challenges face government administrators, we have had to rely too much on the luck of having the right person at the right place at the right time. That’s too risky a strategy for twenty-first-century government, where wicked problems quickly punish governments that do not rise quickly enough to the challenges they face.

The more complex government’s policy strategies become, both technically and organizationally, the more government needs skilled rocket science leaders. However, the government over the last generation has systematically underinvested in its people. Government workers have often been seen as impediments to efficiency, as dead weights that clog government’s operations, or often simply as assets that do not matter. The nadir came during the Reagan administration, when Terry Culler, who once headed the federal government’s efforts to improve workforce effectiveness, wrote a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that argued “most federal workers need only be competent.” Better, he argued, to put society’s smartest workers in the private sector, where they create more value.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as we slide deeper into the Mildred paradox and its corollary, government needs a large and steady supply of smart leaders. Government’s results are only as good as the government officials who build the bridges among the complex components of public programs—and the private sector can only be successful when these bridges work.

The Office of Personnel Management has historically been charged with developing the federal government’s managers, but it increasingly has fallen short in this mission. The powerful lesson of successful private sector companies is that they look on their people as their most important asset. The government must do the same, with an aggressive program to hire and develop skilled managers. *We need to devise a government-wide strategy of developing rocket science leaders, because only skilled leaders can drive the next generation of government.* In homeland security, we need skilled leaders who can reach across government’s many organizational boundaries and complex cultures to weave a more seamless system for preventing and responding to problems. In agriculture and environmental protection, we need officials who can link the processes of saving trees with the need to produce sustainable forest products. In human services, we need officials who know how to build a safety net whose web is tight enough to

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<sup>8</sup> Terry Culler, “Most Federal Workers Need Only Be Competent,” *Wall Street Journal* (May 21, 1986).

keep society's needy from falling through. We need rocket scientists throughout government—and a strategy to produce a strong and steady supply of them.

4. *Sort out the who-does-what.* The deep patterns identified in this book—the growing privatization of government and the publicization of the private sector—are irreversible. Some reformers are looking for a solution that will draw clear boundaries, once and for all, but that is a fool's errand. The boundaries between the sectors have become blurred, and interdependence between the two is here to stay. However, government's reliance on the private sector, not only for administrative support but also for fundamental policy decisions, threatens both the effective administration and democratic control of government action.

We've simply pushed government's dependence on the private sector too far. We have defense contractors who not only build weapons systems but design them and oversee other contractors. We have had crises in space because NASA struggled to evaluate the advice it was getting from its contractors. We have local social workers who are trained to help society's needy but who spend most of their time managing contracts with nonprofit organizations who do most of the work: they are not doing what they were trained to do, they weren't trained for the jobs they're doing, and the very people for whom the programs were created often suffer in the process. As then-head of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, David B. Walker argued in 2007, "there is a need to focus greater attention on what type of functions and activities should be contracted out and which ones should not."<sup>9</sup> The fundamental problem is not the ideological debate between conservatives and liberals, which characterized the Reagan-era debates over Reform 5.0. Rather, the issue is the Reform 6.0 question of how government can best accomplish the people's work, who ought to do it, and how the people can hold government accountable for getting that work done.

To govern well, government needs to be a smart buyer: to make the fundamental decisions about what goods and services to buy and how well they are working.<sup>10</sup> As Reform 5.0 advanced, government's capacity to act as a smart buyer diminished. In many areas, anything that could be contracted out *was* contracted out. This not only blurred the lines of public and private roles but made it vastly more difficult to ensure that taxpayer-funded programs served the public purpose. We do not need to pretend we can (or should) put the privatization genie back into its bottle. Indeed, tight partnerships among government, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations are irreversible and useful, for they provide government valuable flexibility and expertise. But *we do need to enhance government's capacity to oversee the complex interdependence that has emerged.*

This does not mean we need to grow government, because a very small number of government workers can leverage a vast network of public and private partners. But if government does not enhance its own capacity—to do the things that only government can do and that government must do in a democratic society—the quality of public services and the accountability of public programs will inevitably diminish. We will have more waste, fraud, and abuse because of contractors who steer public money to their narrow interest. From defense policy to environmental protection and from homeland security to drug safety, we will have private partners who work to the narrow letter of the law but miss making the connections among programs that are needed to make these programs work. We will inevitably find ourselves mired in more crises like 2007's mortgage meltdown, in which the tunnel-vision

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<sup>9</sup> See David B. Walker's testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Federal Acquisitions and Contracting: Systemic Challenges Need Attention*, Report GAO-07-1098T (July 17, 2007), 12, at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d071098t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d071098t.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> See Donald F. Kettl, *Sharing Power: Public Governance and Private Markets* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993).

decisions of private rating agencies and mortgage lenders crippled the economy and pulled the government into a multibillion bailout.

5. *Drive commitment to results from the very top.* On each of these steps, government needs a commitment from the very top. We need top-level officials focused on producing results that matter to citizens. They do not need to do it themselves, but they need to make sure it gets done. In particular, the president needs a performance czar, a White House official whose sole job is to focus the efforts of the executive branch on producing results. The president also needs someone who, in a crisis, can bring to the table the management instincts required to solve problems. There is little political payoff for government doing hard things well, but there is a large, growing, and inescapable political cost for doing important things badly. Indeed, this proved to be the central political problem for the George W. Bush administration. Despite the roller coaster of the administration's problems with the war in Iraq—and the big changes in public opinion polls that resulted—the point at which the president's negative ratings exceeded his positive ones and remained there was in the month after Katrina struck, when the public concluded the administration had bungled the response to the storm.

The history of presidential “czars” is a checkered one, but *we need—and the president needs—a point person whose sole job is to make the pursuit of outcomes the federal government's top priority.* A senior member of the president's staff, present in the West Wing for important meetings on big issues, could bring a who-does-what-and-how perspective to the important decisions. The president is a political leader but also the nation's chief executive officer, and the president needs a management consultant at hand to ensure that the law is in fact faithfully executed. Such a management czar would have saved the Bush administration tremendous heartache in the days after Katrina.

On Capitol Hill, Congress must grapple with the powerful instincts for fragmentation of policy making among the scores of congressional committees and subcommittees and for selective intervention in areas of credit-claiming, casework, and micromanagement.<sup>11</sup> Congress has at its disposal a powerful tool, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which requires agencies to identify the outcomes they are seeking to achieve and to measure their success in doing so. Federal agencies are already producing GPRA reports, although there is little evidence that they take them very seriously.<sup>12</sup> But Congress can change that. In their oversight hearings, congressional committees ought on every occasion to call on agency managers to summarize the outcomes they are seeking to achieve and to inform members of Congress of their success in achieving them. Budget hearings ought to begin with a careful look at the objectives of federal programs, agencies' success in achieving outcomes, and what plans they have for improving their success in the future. *We need to make these simple questions—what government agencies are trying to do and how well they are doing it—the core of every congressional hearing.*

Too often, Congress reinforces the executive branch's instinct toward tunnel vision by holding hearings focused on hyper-narrow (and often headline-grabbing) issues. It isn't reasonable to try to change the laws of politics. But it is essential that when the Secretary of Labor appears before a committee, members of Congress ask about the department's broader mission and its success in achieving it: jobs created, workers trained, workplaces made safe. The head of the FDA needs to answer on a regular basis for the overall health of the American public and for the safety of the drugs citizens take. Such a dialogue doesn't need to be lengthy, but it needs to remind everyone—the members of Congress

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<sup>11</sup> See David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> See testimony of Bernice Steinhardt, U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Government Performance: Lessons Learned for the Next Administration on Using Performance Information to Improve Results*, GAO-08-1026T (July 24, 2008), at [www.gao.gov/new.items/d081026t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081026t.pdf).

asking the questions and the members of the executive branch answering them—about the broader goals they all seek.

These five elements in Reform 6.0 focus mainly on the federal government. However, state and local governments can—indeed, must—take the same steps. The nation’s government system has become so interdependent that government does not work well unless all parts of government work. This, in fact, is the lesson of Katrina. Reform 6.0 requires a seamless focus on effective governance.

This strategy requires elected officials to step away, even if only periodically and momentarily, from the short-term political behavior that focuses administrators on narrow areas in which they can deflect scrutiny and control results. That kind of defensive administration, however, ducks the big problems—and often makes them worse. Solving the problems of the twenty-first century requires government administrators to take risks on the job, in an environment that often provides few rewards for good results and strong penalties for public failure. The rise of government’s rocket scientists—of skilled leaders who have discovered smart transformation and collaboration strategies that get results—is proof that taking risks to make government work better can in fact produce better government. It is also proof that government can build a culture in which the quest for high performance produces its own rewards.

We know what the government needs to work better. And we know how to take the steps we need. An increasingly complex world and increasingly wary citizens will surely punish a government that fails to rise to the challenges of the twenty-first century with a governance system that works: one that mobilizes government in the public interest and ensures collaboration to achieve results that matter for people. This is the core of Reform 6.0, and it must drive the next government of the United States.

If we fail to rise to the challenges of Reform 6.0, we’ll end up with a government that works poorly, proves unacceptably expensive, and is unresponsive and unaccountable. And for the first time in American history, we will have failed to rise to the challenge of our founders: adapting America’s robust democratic system to the tectonic shifts we have regularly faced and conquered. Should we fail, it is no exaggeration to conclude that American democracy and the nation’s place in the world will be at risk. And—this is not too big an exaggeration—the future of American democracy will be at risk. We know how to do this. We will be punished if we fail.