



**Press Overview for Paul Light**  
**Presented by Lyon Park Public Relations**  
**06/11/08**

**Broadcast**

“Lou Dobbs Radio Show,” CNN Radio, June 11  
“Washington Journal,” C-SPAN, June 8  
“Lou Dobbs Tonight,” CNN, June 4  
“Tim Farley Show,” POTUS 08, XM Satellite Radio, May 29  
Bill Moyers' Journal, Essay, May 23  
MSNBC, David Schuster Politics Hour, May 22  
Federal News Radio, The Daily Dose,” May 15

Scheduled

Public Radio's “Marketplace,” commentary (Air Date: Next two weeks)  
C-SPAN2's Book TV, editing “Washington Journal” appearance into program (Air Date: TBD)  
“Midday,” Minnesota Public Radio, June 16  
“On Point,” National Public Radio, June 16  
“The Bob Edwards Show,” XM Radio, June 23

**Print**

Washington Post, “In the Loop,” June 11  
Los Angeles Times, “Bush Widens Immigration Checks,” June 10  
DC Examiner, “Red Specs the Order of the Day,” June 10  
Christian Science Monitor, “Ask Not What Graduates Can Do for the Nation,” June 9  
POLITICO, “Record Gas Prices Hurt McCain,” June 9  
National Journal's “The Frontrunner,” June 9 (event announcement)  
National Journal's, “CongressDaily, June 9 (event announcement)  
National Journal's, “The Frontrunner,” (Federal Diary abstract)  
Federal Times, “Fixing Government,” June 2  
Washington Post, “Federal Diary,” June 3  
Roll Call, “Book Offers Prescription for Trimming Bureacracy,” May 27  
POLITICO, “New President May Face Chain of Meltdowns,” op-ed, May 13  
Washington Post, “In the Loop,” May 14

**Wire**

McClatchy, “Obama Veepstakes,” June 7 (appeared in Miami Herald)  
Associated Press, “A Crash Course in True Political Science,” May 9

**Online**

Slate.com, “Cold Comfort Farms,” June 10  
UnderstandingGovernment.org, “Light Reading,” June 9  
GovExec.com, “Shedding Light on Government Reform,” June 9  
WashingtonPost.com, Online Chat with Stephen Barr, June 4  
HuffingtonPost.com, “Searching for Godot,” op-ed, May 22  
GovernmentExec.com, “Government at the Breaking Point,” May 14

**Editorial Boards**

McClatchy News Service, June 5  
Los Angeles Times, May 28  
Baltimore Sun, May 14

**Washington Post**  
**Al Kamen, "In the Loop"**  
**June 11, 2008**

**What's Won, Lost in Transition**

The Washington chatter is all about whom Sens. [John McCain](#) and [Barack Obama](#) are going to pick as their running mates. (Yes, we've got your Loop "Pick the Veep" contest entries pending.)

Obama calls it "the most important decision I'll make before I'm president" -- a bit strange when you consider Bush I's pick of [Dan Quayle](#).

But there's another job that both candidates should focus on fairly soon: transition director. Sure, some snarky columnists will gig them for presuming victory by gearing up preelection. But solid transition planning -- and initial personnel decisions -- are simply too important to put off until after the election.

McCain, who would be engaged in a mostly friendly takeover, probably could wait a bit before focusing on this. Obama, looking at a hostile takeover and the need to quickly get his picks in place, will want to move rapidly.

Transition experts single out as the model to follow [Ronald Reagan's](#) transition operation, run by former [Nixon](#) attorney general [Edwin Meese](#), and the personnel planning of former Nixon aide [Pendleton James](#), who was later a professional headhunter. (The [Bush II](#) transition, run by [Dick Cheney](#), with a personnel shop run by [Clay Johnson](#), comes in a close second.)

The personnel chief needs to be someone who's working "totally below the radar," said Colby College professor [G. Calvin Mackenzie](#), "otherwise he becomes a magnet for résumés." The best pick would be "not a political person," but someone who "knows government, the pitfalls, the ethics," and someone who can answer "what are the key positions for our constituencies that we're going to get a lot of pressure on. Vacuum invites all kinds of pressure." Not to mention lengthy infighting.

Most observers cite [Bill Clinton's](#) operation as the worst transition. The Clinton [White House](#), transition expert [Paul C. Light](#) observed, would pass potential candidate lists from one official to another, instead of having a joint review, prolonging the process endlessly. Then came the "bean-counting" exercises over appropriate percentages of women and minorities in each department.

The incoming president, Light said, should also "limit the number of transition teams to a bare minimum, if they have any at all." In addition, he should "put someone in charge of transition planning who's going to move into the White House with him . . . and who'll oversee the personnel process." Someone whose decisions would rarely, if ever, be overturned.

McCain, as it turns out, has a solution to at least part of the problem. He joined with [Sen. Russell Feingold \(D-Wis.\)](#) in the 1990s to sponsor legislation that would cut in half the bloated number of presidential appointees -- 3,000 -- which could save taxpayers more than \$100 million in salaries and benefits.

In addition, as Light points out in his new book, "A Government Ill Executed," the government would actually work more efficiently, with fewer political hacks in federal jobs.

Maybe McCain could get Obama to sign on to the bill?



[http://www.examiner.com/blogs-73-Yeas\\_and\\_Nays](http://www.examiner.com/blogs-73-Yeas_and_Nays)

**Yeas & Nays Column**  
**DC Examiner**

**Red Specs the Order of the Day**  
POSTED June 10, 3:13 AM

Former Sen. Tom Daschle's Sally Jessy Raphael-esque red-rimmed glasses seem to be catching on: At a National Academy of Public Administration event held at the Brookings Institution on Monday, host Jenna Dorn, president of the National Academy of Public Administration, got into the act by sporting her own fiery red specs alongside fellow panelist Daschle.

But it's not a talk-show host gig that Daschle has always longed for; he told Yeas & Nays that, ever since childhood, he's always longed to be the Lone Ranger, Superman or a pilot. Man, with such lofty dreams it must have been tough to settle for "politician."

The Brookings event discussed a new book by scholar Paul Light: "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It."

Light playfully ribbed those on the panel in an effort to boost sales: "You're not listed in the index. Buy the book and look yourself up. It's a sales advantage. My book may hit the remainder tables in a flash. Next week it's on the buck-a-book table!"

## Cold Comfort Farms

By Daniel Politi

Posted Tuesday, June 10, 2008, at 6:27 AM ET

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The *New York Times* leads with a troubling look at how it's shaping up to be a [bad year for global harvests](#). At a time when many are counting on increased output from farms around the world to alleviate the global food shortage, all signs are pointing to the likely outcome that this year's harvests "will be average at best." The *Los Angeles Times* leads with news that the Bush administration has ordered all federal contractors to begin using a government system to check whether their employees are [legally allowed to work in the United States](#). Thousands of companies will now have to use the system known as E-Verify to compare the immigration status of new employees to a Social Security database.

The *Wall Street Journal* leads its world-wide newsbox with a preliminary FBI report that was released yesterday and reveals violent crime in the United States dropped last year [after two years of steady increases](#). But a closer look at the data reveals that crime continued to increase in certain regions and neighborhoods, particularly in low-income urban areas. The *Washington Post* leads with a look at how people are changing their habits in response to [high gasoline prices](#). Many are driving less, and changing general aspects of their lives with the full expectation that prices won't be coming down in the near future. Analysts say there are signs that people are thinking long term about reducing their gas consumption instead of simply waiting for the prices to drop. *USA Today* leads with a specific example of these changes and reports that some police departments are encouraging officers to get out of their cars and [walk more](#) in their neighborhoods. Some say these cost-saving measures decrease security because cops are less visible and may take longer to reach the scene of a crime.

To meet the soaring demand for food, farmers have been busy trying to increase output by devoting additional land to crops and planting more frequently. But the [weather hasn't been helping](#), as many American farmers are seeing their production depleted by too much rain while Australia continues to suffer from droughts, to name just two examples. Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, some farmers simply haven't been able to keep up with the skyrocketing prices of certain key commodities, such as fertilizer and fuel. "The planting has gotten off to a poor start," said a grains analyst. "The anxiety level is increasing." As the *NYT* notes near the end of its story, it's still too early to draw any conclusions about how this year's harvests will shape up, and the outlook could improve. But, by the same token, things could also get worse. "I don't know if this is the worst year we've ever had, but it's moving up the list pretty quick," one Indiana farmer said.

President Bush's executive order mandating that contractors use E-Verify marks the first time that the once-voluntary system will become mandatory for a [large group of employers](#). But the system has been criticized in the past because the Social Security database it relies on is plagued with errors that could result in complications for legal residents. Some are wondering how the government will enforce that all of its contractors are using the system, particularly considering that their numbers have greatly increased since Bush became president. "It's a very large number and very difficult to track," Paul Light, a federal contracting guru, said. "Who is responsible for making sure the sub-sub-sub-contractor is using E-Verify?"

Filling up the tank these days might lead people to curse gas-station owners, as many think the retailers are making a fortune with the high prices. But nothing could be further from the truth, [reports the LAT](#).

Some gas-station owners are closing shop because they can't keep up with the rising prices and lower demand while those that are staying open say they're being stretched to the limit.

Motorists aren't the only ones suffering. The *WSJ* takes a look at the data and says that on certain routes airlines have to spend [more than half the cost of the average ticket](#) to pay for fuel. The rising cost of gas is part of the reason why airlines are imposing new fees for certain services, such as checking a bag.

The *NYT* fronts word that Verizon, Sprint, and Time Warner Cable have reached an agreement with New York's attorney general to block access to Internet newsgroups and Web sites that [contain child pornography](#). The agreement won't just affect people in New York because the companies provide Internet access to millions of Americans. The attorney general hopes to soon reach agreements with other service providers, many of whom have long resisted efforts that would cause them to police what their customers do online. Officials recognize the move won't completely cut off access to all child pornography, but it should at least make it more difficult to find. Strangely enough, the *NYT* doesn't include a single voice of dissent from anyone who might think this is not the best idea. Of course, it's likely that no one wants to be seen as publicly defending child pornography, but TP finds it difficult to believe that there aren't people worried about where this could lead if the government begins to ask service providers to block more and more sites that are seen as undesirable.

The *WP* fronts a look at how the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development played a hand in the [proliferation of subprime mortgages](#). HUD officials wanted those with a lower income to be able to own their own homes and so ordered the mortgage finance firms Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae to purchase more of these so-called "affordable" loans. Now many of these lower-income and minority buyers that HUD was supposed to help are expected to lose their homes because they can't afford the payments. "For HUD to be indifferent as to whether these loans were hurting people or helping them is really an abject failure to regulate," a law professor said.

As the presumptive presidential nominees continue to criticize the influence of lobbyists in Washington, some lobbyists are feeling offended that they're all being thrown in the same bag, [notes the WP](#). Sens. John McCain and Barack Obama make no distinction between a lobbyist for a big oil company and others who push more socially conscious messages. There are even those who actually lobby to increase transparency in government. But to the campaigns, anyone who is registered to lobby has become persona non grata. "[T]here are many lobbyists who do remarkable work for the public good," the president of the Humane Society of the United States said.

If you're looking for an easy way to reduce the risk from a cornucopia of diseases, you might as well spend a little more time in the sun, [reports the LAT](#). A new study released today reveals that men who don't have enough vitamin D in their bodies have more than double the normal risk of suffering a heart attack. This is the latest finding that seems to suggest a little sunshine (or, of course, a little pill) could go a long way to promoting good health. Not everyone is convinced, and scientists emphasize the relationship between vitamin D and disease prevention hasn't been proved yet, but as one scientist put it, "what's wrong with keeping an adequate level of vitamin D in the blood in case it is?"

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**Article URL:** <http://www.slate.com/id/2193277/>

## Bush widens immigration checks

Federal contractors must verify workers' legal status, his order says. Millions could eventually be affected.

By Nicole Gaouette

Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

June 10, 2008

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration, in an aggressive new effort to keep illegal immigrants out of the workforce, on Monday ordered all companies doing business with the federal government to begin ensuring their employees can legally work in the U.S.

[The order](#) will require thousands of firms to use a government system called E-Verify to check workers' Social Security numbers. The system has been voluntary for private firms but mandatory for government agencies.

The policy, which initially applies to new hires, eventually could affect millions of federal contract workers nationwide whose jobs range from serving cafeteria food to launching NASA spacecraft. The step is one of several the administration planned after Congress failed last year to pass an overhaul of immigration laws.

"The federal government should lead by example and not by exhortation," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, who has encouraged firms to use E-Verify.

Groups advocating immigration restrictions have embraced E-Verify as a way to weed out illegal workers. But it has been criticized by business groups and immigrant advocates because errors in the Social Security database can lead to red-flagging legal residents.

And with the rapid expansion of federal contracting under President Bush, some critics questioned whether the order would be workable.

"I just don't know how the administration is going to enforce this," said Paul C. Light, a New York University professor and federal contracting expert who said such outsourcing had grown by 70% under Bush. "It's a very large number and very difficult to track. Who is responsible for making sure the sub-sub-sub-contractor is using E-Verify?"

E-Verify is already a success, Chertoff said, predicting that the executive order would affect "hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers."

Chertoff made the announcement during an appearance with Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez in which they touted administration progress in enforcing immigration laws and beefing up border security. They also urged Congress to pass an immigration overhaul including guest worker programs, enforcement, and some accommodation for illegal immigrants currently in the United States.

"We cannot neglect our economic security, and that is exactly what we're doing by neglecting comprehensive immigration reform," said Gutierrez, who worked with Chertoff and a bipartisan group of lawmakers on the 2007 legislation.

[E-Verify](#) is now used by more than 69,000 companies, with about 1,000 firms signing up weekly for

the free Internet-based system.

Many companies have enrolled because of stepped-up federal immigration raids. In industries that traditionally rely on immigrant labor, such as meatpacking, companies understand that not using E-Verify can prompt immigration officials to take a closer look.

Chertoff said E-Verify cleared 99.5% of qualified employees automatically. But in 2006 the Social Security inspector general found discrepancies in 17.8 million records for citizens and legal immigrants that would create a "significant workload" to correct.

Lawmakers and other critics warned that forcing the more than 200,000 federal contractors to join E-Verify could overwhelm the Social Security Administration and create havoc for legal workers.

"As the administration requires more employers and workers to move into E-Verify, it should at the same time ensure that the system does not impinge upon U.S. citizens' fundamental right to earn a living," said Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose), head of the House subcommittee on immigration.

Firms doing business with the government risk losing their contracts if they break federal rules. Some business executives worry the new requirement could add expenses.

"There's concern about increased costs and delays in hiring brought about by inaccuracies in the database," said Neal J. Couture, executive director of the National Contract Managers Assn.

Timothy D. Sparapani of the American Civil Liberties Union argued that E-Verify was "not real immigration enforcement" because the system could not detect applicants who used documents stolen from legal workers. He predicted the system would prompt more identity theft by illegal immigrants.

"American workers' identities are essentially going to become a black market commodity," Sparapani said.

Still, many were pleased by Monday's action. "With today's announcement by Secretary Chertoff, we are diminishing the ability of illegal immigrants to find employment in the United States," said Rep. Brian P. Bilbray (R-Carlsbad).

Added Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which advocates restricting all immigration: "It's an excellent idea, long overdue."

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## LIGHT READING

Topic: [The Forum](#)

09. June 2008 | [Print This Post](#) | [Email This Post](#) |

To most of the world, the name Paul Light doesn't ring a bell. But for any journalist that covers the federal bureaucracy, Light, a professor at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, has also an almost heroic stature with his ability to provide the perfect, pithy quote about a government problem.

Light took his act on the road this morning when he appeared in downtown D.C. at the National Academy of Public Administration, a non-profit that works on public management issues. He was there with other leading lights (pun intended) in the world of bureaucratic scholarship- and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.)- to talk about his new book *A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It*.

Light gave the audience some taste of his quotable wit saying that the kind of pizza White House officials were eating probably affected them more than any government precedent in developing the Department of Homeland Security. And he provided self-deprecating humor, noting a reviewer judged the book "pedantic" and that it was probably a better value for people to wait a month for it go into the remaindered section.

But for the most part he abandoned his wry academic/observational tone in the name of [forcefully advocating](#) for politicians to change the bureaucracy. He called both Barack Obama and John McCain "reform" candidates who could bring changes Light wants in the 1.8-million employee federal bureaucracy. These include slashing the number of political appointees and cutting the overall number of management positions. The money saved by these moves could be re-directed to the employees that directly provide needed government services (i.e. port security officers, meat inspectors, emergency responders etc.).

Light said that the bureaucracy is perpetually maligned but that the "velocity" of bureaucratic problems during the Bush administration- from Hurricane Katrina to Walter Reed to contaminated meat and tainted toys- is new territory. However, Light cautioned against "hyper-reform." He noted that both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush came into the White House with their own "re-inviting government" programs. The goals of those programs are now seen not in the federal workforce, but at a hard-to-find page on the [North Texas University Web site](#).

Daschle mostly deferred to Light. But near morning's end he provided needed perspective in a session that had veered into inside baseball about various commissions that have failed to save the bureaucracy "I don't mean to be partisan," Daschle said, "But it doesn't help when Presidents say 'government is the problem' and Presidents have said this during state of the union speeches."

Daschle was taking aim at the current president and Ronald Reagan, who popularized the idea that the bureaucracy stinks. One interesting consequence of this idea is that since Reagan less people wanted to work for the federal government. Now, thousands of baby boomers are leaving federal government over the next two years. Who will replace them?

Light has the idea of selling the federal government like a non-profit to young people motivated to do good. The idea makes a lot of sense- hundreds of applications pour in for research jobs at environmental justice nonprofits in Washington, D.C. What can the Environmental Protection Agency do to lure those people?

Unfortunately, these and other questions weren't really addressed today. It was an edifying discussion, but one full of jargon and heated digression into obscure federal re-alignments (apparently the Securities

and Exchange Commission has been up to no good in their management structure). This is important to learn about. But it would be nice if the people most passionate about government could better communicate its importance to a skeptical public. Light is great, but he shouldn't be the only bureaucracy expert on journalist's rolodex. MB

## Record gas prices could hurt McCain

By: [David Paul Kuhn](#)

June 9, 2008 07:47 PM EST

More Americans now view energy as a serious concern than at the low point of the 1979 energy crisis, according to a Politico analysis of historical Gallup Polls. And the percentage of voters who consider energy issues “very important” in determining their vote has also risen dramatically since the last election, from 54 percent in October 2004 to 77 percent in a [recent poll](#) released by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press — a percentage point increase nearly double that of any other issue.

Distress over gas prices could hardly come at a worse time for Republicans. Voters usually blame a poor economy on the party that controls the presidency, and there are few more potent reminders of hard economic times than the high cost of fuel at the pump. On Sunday, for the first time ever, AAA found that the national average cost of gasoline rose to \$4 a gallon.

“Of all the products that we buy, there is none in which the price is so obvious and so in our face,” said Stephen Hess, a presidential analyst at the Brookings Institution. “It’s not how often we buy gas — it’s how often we pass a gas station. It has a built-in irritant.”

Thus far, it’s McCain who has most suffered from that irritation. On an issue that three in four registered voters believe will be “very important” in making their “decision about who to vote for this fall” — a greater portion of voters than those who cite terrorism, moral values or the war in Iraq — Pew shows Republicans lagging Democrats by 15 percentage points on who will give “greater priority” to energy. While McCain’s bid for the presidency is likely dependent on his ability to outperform the unpopular Republican brand, the same poll shows him trailing the GOP on the issue. He trails Obama by an even larger margin, 18 percentage points, among voters asked which candidate would better “deal” with the energy issue.

**“Gasoline prices hurt Carter much more than the Iran hostage crisis,” said Paul Light, author of “A Government Ill Executed” and a professor at New York University’s Wagner School of Public Service.**

**Light conducted a poll in March that found concern about gasoline prices had risen almost as dramatically as the prices themselves, and were now voters’ second biggest concern.**

**“Among the true independents this is just the kind of issue that cuts hard,” he said. Independents have been particularly turned off by McCain’s gas tax holiday proposal — [a May Quinnipiac poll](#) found independent voters were more likely to disapprove than approve of his gas tax holiday plan by 18 percentage points, a gap more than twice that of party-registered voters.**

It’s not just independents who are concerned, though. A record 94 percent of Americans believe that the “energy situation” is “very serious” or “fairly serious,” according to [the latest polling](#) by Gallup this March. The previous high was 85 percent in February of 1979, shortly before the price of crude oil reached a then-record high of \$103 per barrel in 2008 dollars in April 1980 — a record that held until earlier this year.

While there are no gas lines today, Americans are again curtailing their lifestyles in response to the high prices. A recent report by the Federal Highway Administration showed that traffic for the month of March fell for the first time since 1979. Several U.S. airlines have recently begun eliminating thousands of jobs, grounding aircraft and charging for all checked baggage, all to cope with fuel costs.

Gas prices have also pushed the Big Three automakers to slow the manufacture of gas guzzling sport utility vehicles and trucks. General Motors announced last week that it may discontinue its Hummer brand.

So far, proposals to deal with the problem have been limited. McCain and Hillary Rodham Clinton failed to gain much traction for their proposed federal gas tax holiday, which would have removed the 18.4 cent-a-gallon federal gas tax for the summer. Obama opposed the idea, calling the gas tax holiday political pandering — a position that put him in line with most economists.

Four years ago, when gas prices also surfaced as a campaign issue, Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) called for President Bush to “divert the raw crude oil” from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to the market in order to offer temporary relief for U.S. consumers. President Bush rebuffed Kerry, arguing that the reserves were for emergencies that affect supply. Bush did, however, release and sell off 11 million barrels of oil after Hurricane Katrina.

At the time, the average gas price at the pump was about \$2 a gallon. The national average is roughly double that today.

“It’s clearly a very big issue,” said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, McCain’s chief policy adviser. “It is one piece of an economy that is really weighing heavily on voters’ minds.”

Neither campaign has proposed tapping the reserves. Eakin said the McCain campaign would, in coming months, highlight McCain’s opposition to “handouts” for oil companies.

At a fundraiser on Monday, McCain restated his support for the gas tax holiday, though he added that he does not “pretend that it’s an answer to our energy problems.”

Obama also weighed in on the gas price debate Monday, saying that he would impose a windfall profits tax on U.S. oil companies. Obama added that McCain’s support for Bush’s tax cuts amounts to support for subsidies for oil companies.

A senior adviser to Obama reiterated that the Illinois senator will continue to oppose the gas tax holiday.

## Shedding Light on Government Reform

By Tom Shoop | Monday, June 09, 2008 | 05:10 PM

Paul Light was in fine form this morning at an event at the National Academy of Public Administration to promote his [new book](#), *A Government Ill Executed*.

In the federal sector, he noted, "breakdowns are coming at greater velocity." And Light is convinced they're going to get worse, in the absence of actions to fix government's ills -- which he pegs, among other issues, as mission creep at agencies, a top-heavy chain of command, and excessive delays in the political confirmation process.

What intrigued me most was Light's suggestion that Sens. John McCain and Barack Obama -- both of whom he characterized as good-government advocates -- **ought to team up prior to the election on pieces of legislation aimed at such goals as reducing the number of political appointees and streamlining the appointments process**. It would be interesting indeed to see pressure put on the two senators to back measures that would benefit either of them if elected.

What Light said he didn't want to see was another president with a marquee management reform program, like "reinventing government" or the "president's management agenda." I'm crusade-weary as well at this point, but in the absence of these kinds of rallying cries, I wonder if a president would be able to garner any support for a coherent, sustained effort to fix the kind of systemic problems Light has detailed.

June 3, 2008 Tuesday

Scholar Recommends Federal Government Overhauls

**SECTION:** WASHINGTON NEWS

**LENGTH:** 178 words

The Washington Post (6/3, D4, Barr, 723K) "Federal Diary" column reports if "federal employees are lucky," the "next president" will hear about "a new book by Paul C. Light, the longtime expert on public service," when talk in the Oval Office turns to what to "do about the federal government." The Post adds, "Light, a professor at New York University and a former senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, turned to Alexander Hamilton for the title of the book, 'A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It.' ... 'Federal employees know they do not have enough capacity to do their jobs, and are hungry for change,' Light writes." The Post continues, "Big problems demand big answers, according to Light, and he proposes that the White House and Congress overhaul the government to a degree not seen since the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act." Light's recommendations call "for a sorting out of programs and services to eliminate duplication and overlap," the first of which: "decide what it should keep and what it should drop."

June 9, 2008 Monday

Today's Events In Washington

**SECTION: WASHINGTON'S SCHEDULE**

FEDERAL SERVICE \_ 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. There will be a book launch breakfast event with former Sen. Tom Daschle, D-S.D., for NYU Wagner Professor Paul Light's book, "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It." Location: National Academy of Public Administration, 900 7th St. NW., sixth floor.

National Journal's CongressDaily

June 9, 2008 Monday  
AM Edition

Hot Ticket

ILL ADVISED If you think former White House Press Secretary Scott McCellan's book doesn't have enough finger-pointing -- see item below -- then Paul Light's new book about government failures might pique your interest. "A Government Ill Executed" examines decades of failures involving passport backlogs, toxic toys, tainted meat and other breakdowns. Former Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle, D-S.D., will introduce the book today at 9 a.m. at the National Academy of Public Administration at 900 7th Street, NW. For more info., call (703) 348-7189.

Obama veepstakes: Sebelius?;  
Among names being mentioned as potential running mates for presumed Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama is Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

**BYLINE:** DAVID GOLDSTEIN, [dgoldstein@mcclatchydc.com](mailto:dgoldstein@mcclatchydc.com)

**SECTION:** A; Pg. 2

Ever since Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius turned a red state blue six years ago, she has been a potential vice presidential pick.

She was the rare Democrat who could win Republican votes.

That's why she has been a fixture all these months in the speculation surrounding Sen. Barack Obama's choice of a running mate.

"I think she is being considered," said Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri, an Obama ally and advisor whose name also has gotten some buzz, although she discounts the possibility. "She has great executive skill, has had success in a very difficult terrain and is thought of very highly by her peers, Democrats and Republicans."

A lot of names are in the mix, including Obama's rival, New York Sen. Hillary Clinton. It's unclear whether their private meeting Thursday night settled her future role in the campaign.

In the meantime, how realistic are Sebelius' chances?

The governor said this past week that while she talks with Obama's staff and occasionally with him, "There has been no discussion with me or anyone else on my team about serving as vice president."

**Paul Light, a government expert at New York University, said: "You get on a short list if you have something that you can deliver."**

Based on conversations with several political strategists, analysts and others, here are some of Obama's needs and how well Sebelius might fill them:

Who could aid Obama in a state that would help put Democrats over the top after close finishes in the past two presidential elections?

The chances of Kansas going Democratic in the fall, even with Sebelius on the ticket and her record of red state success, are slim to none. A Democrat running for president has carried the state only once since the 1940s -- Lyndon Johnson in 1964 -- and Kansas hasn't had a Democratic senator since 1939.

"You can't make an argument that Kansas gets in play," said Steve Elmendorf, who helped run Sen. John Kerry's presidential campaign four years ago and backed Clinton this year. "You can make an argument that someone who represents a red state brings that sense to the ticket."

Winning a swing state such as Missouri, where McCaskill might offer a boost, or snatching Virginia from the GOP is important, however. That makes Virginia Sen. Jim Webb -- a Republican-turned-Democrat, a decorated Vietnam veteran and a former Navy secretary -- possibly a strong contender.

Ohio, though, is at the top of the list of must-win states. Clinton trounced Obama in the primary there. That's why popular Gov. Ted Strickland, a Clinton supporter, gets a lot of attention.

But Sebelius also might help. She was born in Ohio and has a political lineage. Her father, John Gilligan, was a former Ohio governor and congressman.

Who could bolster Obama's lack of foreign policy and national security credentials?

This will be where Sen. John McCain, the eventual Republican nominee, will attack. Sebelius, who has even less experience than Obama, offers no help.

"She's a rare political talent," said Jim Jordan, a Democratic political operative and a former director of Kerry's campaign. "But her one conspicuous liability is a lack of foreign and military policy experience."

The names being talked about to fill this gap are Democrats such as Sens. Joseph Biden of Delaware, Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and Evan Bayh of Indiana -- another Clinton ally -- and former Sen. Sam Nunn of Georgia, a defense expert.

Who could help personify Obama's message of change and dialing back the partisanship?

Jim Webb is one. Former Republican Sen. Bill Cohen, who served as President Clinton's defense secretary, could be another.

But it's a pitch straight into Sebelius' wheelhouse. She has a record of drawing crossover voters and independents. She's a Washington outsider and a fresh face in national politics.

Another plus is her gender. More than half the voters are women, and her party's nominee defeated a very popular woman. Obama could feel a need to respond. But it's not a slam-dunk.

"The women who were Hillary Clinton supporters were very loyal to her," said Debbie Walsh, the director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University in New Jersey. "It was about her and her candidacy. I don't think you can put any woman on the ticket and just get women voters."

The veepstakes is one of the capital's favorite political guessing games. There's no perfect formula. Picking a candidate to win a state hasn't worked since 1960, when President Kennedy chose Johnson and captured Texas.

Balancing geography and age also is overrated. Bill Clinton and Al Gore both were from the South and both were baby boomers. But they presented an image of youth and vibrancy.

Choosing a running mate will be Obama's most important decision as nominee. It will say a lot about how he measures his political strengths and shortcomings and how he wants the public to view an Obama presidency.

It's in "the country's interest to make sure I make this decision well," he told CNN this week.

<http://www.csmonitor.com:80/2008/0609/p09s01-coop.html>

## Ask not what graduates can do for the nation

Instead, ask how community leaders and the government can help them do it.

By Paul C. Light

from the June 9, 2008 edition

New York - It's high school graduation time and the halls are ringing with John F. Kennedy's exhortation to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Public service has been prominent in the presidential campaign narratives, and should be a focus at graduations. But such rhetoric is not quite enough to launch this generation into a lifetime of service.

Just as young Americans have redefined social networking through Facebook, they have changed the basic meaning of public service. It no longer denotes a 30-year career in government, but a kaleidoscope of engagement that covers everything from voting to military service.

Young Americans sort through these new options based on the chance they'll make a difference on a specific cause, not with an innate sense of civic duty. They have set records in volunteering for their country and are highly aware of issues such as Darfur, global warming, and the latest international disaster.

Whether they participate in public service as occasional volunteers or as full-time employees, they want meaningful assignments, the chance to learn new skills, and the opportunity to help people.

Young Americans believe that public service is something they can do anywhere at any time. They seem to feel just as engaged in great causes by wearing cancer bracelets, shopping at Whole Foods, and buying clothes as part of Project Red, as they do in voting, writing letters to Congress, and giving a few dollars to a candidate.

Government jobs have little appeal as a path to service for students about to graduate. And government is its own worst enemy here. Young Americans rightly view the government hiring process as slow and confusing, their pay tied more to time on the job than performance, and the chance to make a difference limited by a persistent lack of resources. They also worry that they cannot make a difference in mind-numbing bureaucracies.

So how should commencement speakers approach their speeches given this?

For starters, they should be careful about invoking Kennedy in an era of \$4-a-gallon gasoline and stagflation. With the student loan crisis looming, why shouldn't young Americans wonder whether their country can do for them what it did for Bear Stearns and wealthy farmers? Young graduates have shown they are willing to sacrifice, but need help.

Speakers should promise instead to make it easier for young Americans to solve the big problems facing the world. Stop lecturing graduates about their responsibilities to society. They get it.

Instead, address the parents, teachers, and civic leaders. Help communities understand their responsibilities to young Americans, not vice versa.

Tell these leaders it's important to make time available – during work – to young Americans for volunteering. Tell them to restore civics to the curriculum. Even tell them to create new campaign finance incentives for online fundraising. But most of all, tell them to support the needed expansion of government programs that do a good job, such as Americorps. Tell them to support the quadrupling Americorps and an increase in its tuition benefit.

Congress actually passed the prototype of a new tuition benefit last month when it created a new GI Bill of Rights. Under the \$52 billion program, three-year veterans can earn up to full tuition at any public university in their state.

Why not make a similar program available to Americorps members? Let them earn a year of full tuition in return for the year that they serve.

For a fraction of the cost of the new "Yellow Ribbon" GI bill, a larger Americorps would send a clear message that public service is not only conceivable, but doable. It would also help ease the student loan crisis without a heavy federal investment in new subsidies.

Moreover, new research strongly suggests that Americorps members are much more likely than their peers to increase their volunteering after they leave the program. And they are more likely to take public service jobs such

as teaching. Why not tap into that?

Given the state of the economy, speakers might rephrase Kennedy as follows: "Ask what you can do for your nation, and we will ask what the nation can do about Darfur, global warming, health insurance, an affordable college education, and a long overdue expansion in Americorps." Now that's worthy of a standing ovation.

*Paul C. Light is a professor at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service and the author of "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It."*

# Past the Time for Tinkering on Public Service

By Stephen Barr

Tuesday, June 3, 2008; D04

If federal employees are lucky, an enterprising aide to the next president will make sure that a new book by [Paul C. Light](#), the longtime expert on public service, gets on the agenda for the inevitable [Oval Office](#) discussion on what to do about the federal government.

The government's problems are in plain view -- the sluggish response to Hurricane Katrina, the outpatient scandal at the [Walter Reed Army Medical Center](#), lax oversight by the [Federal Aviation Administration](#), the backlog of benefits claims at the [Social Security Administration](#). To mention a few.

Light, a professor at [New York University](#) and a former senior fellow at the [Brookings Institution](#), turned to [Alexander Hamilton](#) for the title of the book, "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It."

In the Federalist papers, Hamilton argued, "A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government."

The book's title does not mean Light views today's government as a failure (in 2002, he wrote a book celebrating the government's greatest achievements), but he is concerned that the government "is not uniformly well executed" and may not be able to rise to the tasks ahead.

"Federal employees know they do not have enough capacity to do their jobs, and are hungry for change," Light writes. "They also know the time for tinkering is long past.

"Improving the hiring process will not suffice if new recruits do not have the opportunity to grow; enhancing retention will not help if it produces more layers of management; providing new resources will not matter if they are spread too thin; and setting priorities will not generate clarity if appointees are not in office long enough to make the decisions stick," Light says.

Big problems demand big answers, according to Light, and he proposes that the White House and Congress overhaul the government to a degree not seen since the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act.

He contends that the baby-boom retirements give Congress and the next president "the ability to reenergize the federal service without inflicting great pain."

The generational turnover will create gaps in programs and services, but the retirements also create an opportunity to "thin government, shift resources downward to the front lines where government services are delivered" and "abandon needless reform," Light writes.

Light calls for a sorting out of programs and services to eliminate duplication and overlap. His first recommendation is for the government to "decide what it should keep and what it should drop."

He would reduce the number and layers of managers by half at all levels, then shift those jobs to the front lines. "Such redistribution would address complaints from lower-level staff that their organizations simply have too few employees to succeed" and should reduce some of the pressure to contract out federal work, he says.

Light also proposes to cut the number of political appointees by half, and to abolish any political position that is not filled within six months of it becoming open. That would force a new president to do more planning and push the Senate to move nominations quickly, he believes.

He recommends more training for federal employees and says agencies need to better focus on upgrading technology and speeding up hiring.

To attract young workers into government, Light suggests that agencies use nonprofit organizations as a model, because many young people see them as workplaces where they can find a trusting, innovative and helpful environment that helps them flourish.

The proposals in the book grow out of research that Light has conducted over the past decade. He

acknowledges that many of his recommendations will not be easy to implement.

Unions, contractors, grantees and some members of Congress will object to "top-to-bottom reform," and the White House will likely balk at cutting the number of political appointees, Light says.

To overcome opposition, Light calls for creation of a national commission on government restructuring, which "just might be able to create the will to act."

Light is optimistic that federal employees will embrace "radical reform," because surveys show they see the need for improvements in staffing, budgeting and training that would permit their agencies to better serve the public and carry out the nation's laws.

"With the baby-boom retirements looming, there is one great opportunity to restructure the entire concept of federal employment," Light writes. "It is an opportunity that cannot be ignored."

## Book Offers Prescription for Trimming Bureaucracy

May 27, 2008, 4:53 p.m.

By *Melissa Giaimo*

*Roll Call Staff*

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In the eyes of one Capitol Hill veteran and management guru, government inefficiency has grown to a level that is intolerable. So he has made it his mission to work toward a solution, in part by writing a book that contains advice for Congress.

While some readers may find the result pedantic, Paul Light's experience working on the Hill and his research on management allow him to offer timely and substantive tips that may be of interest, especially to Members and staffers on government oversight committees.

In "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It," Light argues that the sluggish response to Hurricane Katrina, gridlock at the Social Security Administration and in passport bureaus, faulty intelligence about Iraq and a shortage of young civil servants all point to the worst breakdown in the history of the federal government. Using Alexander Hamilton's seven measures for effective government, he charts how Congress can reinvigorate the federal service and put the government back on track.

"Members of Congress are going to have to get mad enough that they [decide they] need something comprehensive," to resolve the problem, Light said in an interview.

Excess layers between the top and bottom of government are the main source of inefficiency, contributing to entangled bureaucracy and frustrated workers, according to Light.

"We've just got to restructure the federal hierarchy," he said. "I think that's the single most important thing we need to do."

He recommends that Congress set up a committee or a special investigations panel like the 9/11 commission to analyze the government structure and give advice on how it can be streamlined. The backlog of presidential appointees is another prime example of government inefficiency, Light said. He suggests reducing the number of presidential appointees and ensuring that the approval process takes no more than 60 days.

Another government excess is the rise of what he calls "the hidden work force" of contractors, grantees, and state and local employees. He believes it's time for Congress to stop outsourcing government projects.

"Either feed the federal government the resources to do its job, or tell it what not to do," he said. "Don't hide cost by passing it on to contractors."

In what might be a good sign for enacting change, Light said Capitol Hill has escaped some of the recruitment problems plaguing executive branch agencies, and has young, energetic staffers.

"I think most Congressional staff come to the Hill out of a desire to make a difference," he said. With the retirement of the baby boomers and with a new presidential administration on the horizon, now is a critical time for legislators to start thinking about changes, Light said. And they can find all the answers they need in the nation's first government road map, "The Federalist Papers," he added.

"Hamilton's principles still rule," he said.

Light was a fellow with the American Political Science Association for the late Rep. Barber Conable Jr. (R-N.Y.) and worked for former Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) as a special adviser and professional staffer on the Governmental Affairs Committee in the late 1980s. After serving as a fellow at the Brookings Institution, Light is now a professor at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Federal Times

June 2, 2008

Correction Appended

Fixing Government;

Reader suggestion: Fewer political appointees

Star Kline, a senior public health analyst at the National Cancer Institute writes, "Designate explicit limits on the number and depth of political appointees for each department and independent agency. And replace those appointees with managers from the Senior Executive Service."

The problem

There are roughly 3,200 political appointees in the federal government; more than 1,000 of them require confirmation by the Senate.

The confirmation process is time-consuming, requiring an FBI background check and a set of complicated questionnaires and financial disclosures.

Many of these appointments take months, even more than a year in some cases, to work their way through the Senate confirmation process. During the Kennedy administration, it took about 2½ months for the average appointee to be confirmed. Now it takes closer to nine months. Many appointees serve only 18 to 24 months. Then the whole process starts again.

That means key posts are often unfilled, for months or years.

But the bigger problem, according to Paul Light, a professor of public administration at New York University and the author of "A Government Ill Executed," is what he calls the "layering" of appointees.

"Political appointees occupy between 25 percent and 40 percent of the layers between the president and front-line employees," like Veterans Affairs nurses or Forest Service firefighters, Light said. "There's more and more political appointees, but no gain whatsoever of the executive branch's control."

Benefits and drawbacks

Experts who study the federal work force generally agree that fewer political appointees would result in two benefits: more accountability and efficiency.

The accountability would come from having more streamlined leadership. Experts say the government has unnecessary layers of leadership, too many political appointees with titles like "deputy associate assistant deputy secretary." That can insulate appointees from being accountable for their failures.

Having more career employees in leadership and senior management roles would boost efficiency, according to Max Stier, president of the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization that encourages employment in the public sector.

Many political appointees serve short terms, and don't adequately tap the expertise of longtime career employees.

"They don't understand the culture sufficiently," Stier said. "They're rewarded for policy development and crisis management, not for implementing and executing against a long-term plan."

Cutting the number of political positions could also boost morale among career executives because it would create more opportunities for advancement and more incentive to stay in government.

"We've set an artificially low glass ceiling for career advancement of top managers," said Norm Ornstein, a political scientist at the American Enterprise Institute.

### Feasibility

The issue of political appointees has received some attention in Congress recently: Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, are working on legislation that would cut about 1,000 political jobs.

The senators started working on the bill last September, but it hasn't yet been introduced.

But accomplishing this would be a steep political challenge. Presidents view appointees as a vehicle for shaping policy, and have historically been reluctant to give up that power.

The appointments are also a vehicle for political patronage.

"There are more prospective political appointees around [presidential candidates] McCain and [Sen. Barack] Obama than vultures around a dead wildebeest," Light said. "You end up having to fill job after job."

Obama's ethics plan includes reforms to the political appointee process - raising the qualifications for appointment - but does not call for reducing the number.

McCain's government reform plan does not mention appointees.

"It's a better opportunity now than ever before. ? We have two candidates who are reformers, and the public is responsive to making government work better," said Ornstein, who worked with Collins and Lieberman on the legislation. "I think the bigger problem is in the Senate."

Indeed, legislators have increased the number of Senate-confirmed appointees in recent years; reducing that would be seen as diminishing the Senate's role in providing "advice and consent."

May 23, 2008

**BILL MOYERS:** Welcome to THE JOURNAL.

Before we begin, get a wagonload of this. You know the election year farm bill that's been so much in the news this week? The one that gives billions of dollars to very wealthy farmers and landowners passing themselves off as farmers? Well, it turns out that buried deep inside its nearly 700 pages is a hidden, additional \$16 billion of taxpayer dough that is, as the WASHINGTON POST reported Wednesday, "lucrative beyond expectations."

True, the bill contains more money for the hungry, but this windfall proves two things: one, before you can help the poor in this country, you have to buy off the rich, and second, so many vested interests have a stake in our government's dysfunction, they don't want to fix it. Just another reason for the candidates - and all of us - to read a new book by one of America's top students of government - Paul Light.

He calls it "a government ill executed" - a phrase from founding father Alexander Hamilton, who warned his fellow architects of our Constitution that "a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government."

Just look at the past six months, says Paul Light. We've seen the federal government at its worst, thoroughly unable to guarantee the faithful execution of all the laws or look out for your interests as citizens.

Where were the watchdogs who should have barked when lenders and borrowers went crazy and sub-prime mortgages began to melt down?

Where were the inspectors before those risky mining practices in Utah led to the deaths of nine men? If you were sitting on one of those grounded airplanes this spring, it's because the FAA had been treating the airlines - not the public - as their customers. When this FAA inspector blew the whistle on his agency - for allowing Southwest Airlines to fly for months without mandatory safety checks, putting lives at stake - his own management threatened him.

**DOUGLAS PETERS:** On his way out the door he made the following statement: "You have a good job here and your wife has a good job over at the Dallas FSDO. I'd hate to see you jeopardize yours and hers career trying to take down a couple of losers."

**BILL MOYERS:** It was one more reminder that whistleblowers are often our first line of defense against corruption and incompetence.

**VOICE:** The question is on passage of the bill...

**BILL MOYERS:** Congress recognized the importance of whistleblowers last year with bills to strengthen protections for those who speak up about wrongdoing in the workplace. This man, Scott Bloch, is supposed to be their guardian.

**SCOTT BLOCH:** Wrongdoers and those who retaliate against them - against whistleblowers should receive real discipline to punish behavior, set the example and reassure the public they are protected by effective oversight.

**BILL MOYERS:** Bloch talks a good game. He was President Bush's choice to run the independent Office of t erasing evidence from his hard drive.

So much for this "independent" watch dog, the administration's own chief enforcer of honesty in government.

That's just the beginning. One federal agency after another has been compromised for partisan reasons.

In a recent survey of more than 1,500 scientists at the environmental protection agency, 60 percent of them - that's 889 scientists - said they had experienced political interference with their work. And their work, remember, is the protection of environmental and human health.

**SEN. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE (D-RI):** Setting aside the statistics or percentages or any conclusions you might draw, just the raw data point of 889 scientists who work for your organization who say that their work has been interfered with politically -

**DR. GEORGE M. GRAY:** I will say that 889 is a number that is unacceptable to me as the head of the Agency's science and technology office and as the Agency's science adviser.

**BILL MOYERS:** There have been so many scandals in government it's hard to keep track. Which is why you probably missed the story of Lurita Doan.

**REP. HENRY WAXMAN (D-CA):** And I'm very pleased to welcome the Honorable Lurita A. Doan.

**BILL MOYERS:** Doan headed one of the most important but little known agencies of government, the General Services Administration. It's supposed to be non-partisan, charged with overseeing nearly \$500 billion dollars of goods and services for the government...

But Doan, a big contributor to Republican campaigns, allowed Karl Rove's White House deputy, Scott Jennings, to detail a partisan strategy right there in her offices - a violation of the Hatch Act.

**REP. BRUCE BRALEY (D-IA):** The Committee has been informed by multiple sources that after Mr. Jennings finished his presentation, you stated, "How can we use GSA to help our candidates in the next election?" Now, reminding you that you are under oath, can you tell the committee whether in fact you did make that statement?

**LURITA DOAN:** I do know that I am under oath, and I will tell you that honestly and absolutely I do not have a recollection of actually saying that.

**BILL MOYERS:** As evidence against Doan mounted, it was too much for House Oversight Committee Chair, Henry Waxman.

**REP. HENRY WAXMAN (D-CA):** It's unusual for me to ever call for the resignation of a federal official. But in your case, I don't see any other course of action. I would urge you to resign.

**BILL MOYERS:** That was almost a year ago and Doan didn't resign until last month when the White House finally asked her to. Not for violating the Hatch Act but because her ongoing and public feud with her agency's own watchdog had become what her bosses at the White House called "a distraction."

**ALPHONSO JACKSON:** Madam Chair, I am here to present FY 2009 HUD Budget.

**BILL MOYERS:** Speaking of distractions, there's Alphonso Jackson, a Bush fundraiser as well as friend and former neighbor. The President rewarded him with a cabinet post running HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a 35 billion dollar agency whose mission, among others, is to help Americans become homeowners.

**SEN. PATTY MURRAY (D-WA):** This subcommittee has a tremendously important oversight...

**BILL MOYERS:** But Jackson, it seems, was also helping friends and cronies get lucrative housing contracts. For half his tenure he's been under investigation and ducking questions.

**SEN. PATTY MURRAY (D-WA):** You have an opportunity to set the record straight here and I'm asking you a direct question.

**ALPHONSO JACKSON:** Therefore I'm going to let the investigators complete their work before I make any public comment.

**BILL MOYERS:** And, in Philadelphia, the city's housing director Carl Greene, says Jackson threatened his agency's funding after he refused to hand over city property worth two million dollars to one of Jackson's friends.

Philadelphia's lawsuit against HUD uncovered this incriminating exchange of email between Jackson's top assistants.

"Would you like me to make his life less happy? If so, how?"

"Take away all of his federal dollars?"

"Let me look into that possibility."

**SEN. ARLEN SPECTER (R-PA):** When you have this exchange of email about making his life unhappy and taking away the funding, and "I'll look into that" and then the same day they take action to withhold what is now amounting to 50 million dollars that's just too much of a coincidence.

**ALPHONSO JACKSON:** As I stated in a memorandum to you. I saw this for the first time on Tuesday. And I am making every effort to get to the bottom of it.

**BILL MOYERS:** But weeks later, Jackson decided he was needed at home.

**ALPHONSO JACKSON:** There comes a time when one must attend diligently to personal and family matters.

**BILL MOYERS:** Even as the president nominated Jackson's replacement, he still had some good words for his good friend Alphonso.

**GEORGE W. BUSH:** He's worked tirelessly at HUD to help America's homeowners. He has transformed a lot of lives. And America is a better place because of your service.

**BILL MOYERS:** We've heard that before.

**GEORGE W. BUSH:** And Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job.

**BILL MOYERS:** You remember Brownie - Michael Brown - the President's man at FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. When Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, Brownie became the personification of high level appointees chosen for loyalty over experience.

Scores of others have won their own brownie points - and lost their bearings - tripped up by conflicts of interest, corruption, or incompetence - they resigned.

If these were simply unconnected anecdotes, it would be one thing. But there's a pattern to them, one our new President is going to have to deal with from day one.

Right away that new President will have to appoint almost 3,000 political executives to oversee the 15 million people who make up the federal workforce.

Paul Light's book pulls no punches, but he also points to changes that could invigorate our government.

So, not only the presidential candidates, but everyone running for Congress should read this book. If our political leaders do not confront this pattern of desperate concern, says this sober scholar, "they are likely to preside over a string of meltdowns that will make the federal response to Hurricane Katrina look like a minor mistake."



## **Searching for Godot**

**By Paul C. Light**

**May 22, 2008**

The job searches are on for the next vice president of the United States. Republican presidential hopeful Sen. John McCain is holding job interviews with three candidates this weekend, while Sen. Barack Obama has set up a search process.

Both searches will share an age-old philosophy: Picking a running mate is less about winning votes than looking good. Vice presidential nominees rarely account for more than one-two percent of the national vote and rarely deliver their own states (think Lloyd Bentsen and Texas, Jack Kemp and New York, and John Edwards and North Carolina).

However, the choice of a running mate is one of the few big decisions a presidential candidate gets to make during the campaign.

A good choice can give voters a reason to take a closer look at the presidential candidate (think Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro), reinforce a broad generational theme (think Bill Clinton and Al Gore), or convey a certain seriousness (think Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale).

In turn, a bad choice can raise questions about judgment (think George H. W. Bush and Dan Quayle), doom a campaign to defeat (think George McGovern and Thomas Eagleton), or invite future scandal (think Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew).

Obama's choice will be among the easiest in recent history. He has to pick a candidate who will give him needed credibility among low-income voters in a battleground state such as Ohio or Pennsylvania. The easiest choice of all would be to put Hillary Clinton on the ticket, but that would be a reluctant alliance that could produce extraordinary conflict on the campaign trail.

Obama would be well advised to nominate a governor instead. He can hardly run against Washington with another senator in tow. Put Pennsylvania's Ed Rendell at the top of the list. He has a strong relationship with the voters that Obama needs, would likely deliver Pennsylvania, and served in the U.S. Army. He can also swing a political hatchet, letting Obama be Obama while cutting McCain down to size.

McCain's choice is much more difficult. He will have little trouble picking someone younger, no disrespect intended. But he also needs a Franken-Veep -- a running mate who can give the ticket a boost in a battleground state such as Florida, assuage the right wing, show some strength on economic issues, appeal to independents and Reagan Democrats, and shake up the race.

It is a nearly impossible search given the Republican talent pool. Louisiana's Bobby Jindal is almost young enough to be McCain's grandchild, Florida's Bill Crist has too little experience, Condoleezza Rice has nothing to add on economic issues, and Mitt Romney is too hungry. Minnesota's Tim Pawlenty looks like the best bet, but he has not attracted much national attention over the years and is no show stopper on the campaign trail.

The two job searches will not be judged just on November 4, however. Obama and McCain must pick candidates who are both good for their campaigns and good for the job. The two goals are not necessarily related.

Thirty years ago, being good for the job did not matter. The vice presidency was little more than a waiting room for a presidential accident. Today, the vice presidency is an extraordinary, perhaps even dangerous platform for influence. Guaranteed a West Wing Office, immediate access to intelligence, a shadow White House staff, and even a vice presidential anthem ("Hail Columbia"), the vice presidency has become one of the most important jobs in the country.

Not to put too much pressure on Obama and McCain, but the next vice president will be among the most important in U.S. history. He or she must not only restore confidence in the vice presidency itself, but must help reassure the nation that Washington will faithfully execute all the laws. The federal government has never needed a vice president's leadership more -- its missions are underfunded, its hierarchy is encrusted, its employees are frustrated, and its hidden workforce of contractors has never been larger. Asked to do more with less year after year, the federal government is on the verge of doing everything with nothing.

As the vice presidential job searches continue, Obama and McCain should ask each candidate what can be done to repair government. Anyone who cannot answer the question should be checked off the list, no matter

how much he or she might help win the election.

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/?sid=1404648&nid=250>

## **Too Much with Too Little?**

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Is the federal government trying to do too much with too few resources? Have agencies started to reach the point they're not able to achieve as much as their missions call for? **Paul Light** is a professor at [New York University's Wagner School of Public Service](#) and the author of *Government Ill Executed*. He shares his theories with us. [Click to hear the interview.](#)

# New president may face chain of meltdowns

By: [Paul C. Light](#)  
May 12, 2008 05:04 PM EST

Except for the occasional swipe at business as usual in Washington, the 2008 campaign has been devoid of the slightest attention to the recent meltdowns in government — the tainted meat, toxic toys, aircraft groundings, contract fraud, counterfeit Heparin or formaldehyde-soaked trailers.

Who knows why? Barack Obama's children are young enough to play with lead-painted toys, John McCain is a former Navy pilot who has personal experience with airplane crashes, and Hillary Rodham Clinton has eaten more hamburgers on the road than Popeye's friend, Wimpy.

The problem is that the federal government is perilously close to the breaking point. Unless the next president takes the lead in fixing government, he or she will preside over a string of meltdowns that will make the federal response to Hurricane Katrina look like a minor mistake.

Just imagine for a moment the worst possible circumstances for running a high-performing government.

First, the federal government would be given missions that stretch well beyond its resources. Asked to do more with less, federal employees would eventually be forced to do everything with almost nothing. Old missions would never fade away, even as new missions would suck up scarce resources.

Second, the federal government would be governed by a chain of command that defies logic. Built upon the belief that more leaders would create better leadership, the federal hierarchy would be stocked with needless layers of management and ample opportunities for political interference. There would be so many deputy associate assistant deputy secretaries, assistant associate undersecretaries and assistant assistant secretaries (repetition intended) that no one could be held accountable for what goes right or wrong in government.

Third, the federal government would be led by presidential appointees selected through a process that guarantees delays, vacancies and embarrassment. It would ask nominees to fill out 60 pages of forms listing every detail of their personal lives, including short trips to Canada and Mexico, the names and birthplaces of long dead relatives and in-laws, and any traffic fine over \$150. And pity the paranoid nominees who are now asked whether anyone, fairly or unfairly, overtly or covertly, will oppose their nominations.

Fourth, many federal employees would be motivated more by pay and compensation than the chance to make a difference. The civil service system would be slow and confusing in its hiring, permissive in giving promotions, reluctant to penalize poor performance, and penurious in giving the federal service the technology, information, employees, and training to do its job well. Federal employees would estimate that roughly a quarter of their co-workers are not doing their jobs well and would rate their leaders as mediocre at best. "Heck of a job, Brownie" would be long gone from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but his spirit would live on in the DNA of appointees selected solely for their

loyalty.

Finally, federal employees would share accountability with a hidden work force of contractors and grantees that disguises the true size of government and diffuses accountability for what goes right and wrong. This shadow work force would grow by more than almost half to nearly 10 million during the war on terror, but it would be nearly impossible to hold it accountable for even egregious failures on the launch pad or in the streets of Baghdad. Under constant harassment from the president's henchmen, government's oversight agencies such as the office of inspector general would be unable to keep up with the number of huge contracts awarded without the slightest competition.

Unfortunately, this is not just the worst case for creating a government well executed. It is the reality of the federal government today: The federal government can no longer guarantee the faithful execution of all the laws. As Alexander Hamilton warned, "a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be in practice a bad government."

The place to start building a government well executed is to talk about it. Instead of frittering away their time on gasoline tax holidays or complaining about congressional earmarks, the three candidates should put their government reform ideas on the table.

The media should also start asking about the recent meltdowns and why none of the candidates has said word one about the shortages of food and airplane inspectors, tax collectors, passenger screeners, and Social Security claims representatives. For every \$1 billion that the next president might save by trimming earmarks, he or she could recapture roughly \$25 billion in unpaid taxes. But that would require more tax collectors. Any candidates ready to make that pledge?

Finally, Americans should stop pretending that the federal government can succeed without an immediate infusion of the resources to do its job. Either that, or start a betting pool on the next government meltdown. It is coming soon to front pages everywhere.

*Paul C. Light is the author of "A Government Ill Executed" and professor at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service.*

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# One Palestinian State, Hold the Swiss

By Al Kamen

Wednesday, May 14, 2008; A17

## Light Reading (Not)

Perfectly timed for the next president's reading list, comes governance expert [Paul C. Light](#)'s analysis of what has to be done to give the country a chance at averting failures of competence and decision-making known as Hurricane Katrina and toxic trailers, Iraq, myriad security breaches, leaded toys, [NASA](#) disasters, wasteful contracts, subprime mortgages, [Walter Reed](#) and the shameful medical services for our veterans, airplane groundings, poisoned drugs, and on and on.

Okay, so it's a bit wonky, perhaps something you want to read only at bedtime, but the next administration had best heed Light's call to focus on getting a coherent, shorter nomination and confirmation process that encourages talented people to sign up for government service.

Light, a former Senate aide and a current professor at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, has studied these issues for more than two decades. He argues that the way to improve decision-making and accountability is to reduce the number of political flunkies -- the acting principal associate deputy undersecretary folks -- layered into the government in recent decades.

And he says it might be time to take a good, hard look at the more than 10.5 million employees working for outside contractors (in 2005) and ask whether the government can assure that they're accountable and that they really save money.

His new book -- you could call it a primer, but it's nearly 280 pages -- is called "A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It." The title is based on [Alexander Hamilton](#)'s warning about malfunctioning government and is guaranteed to limit readership. (On the other hand, it's hard to make this stuff an action thriller.)

The enemy, Light aptly notes, is us, demanding more government services and refusing to pay for them. A formula to produce the government you deserve, every time.

## Government at the Breaking Point

By Tom Shoop | Wednesday, May 14, 2008 | 04:26 PM

Erstwhile *Government Executive* columnist, professor and all-around gadfly Paul Light has a new book out on the state of the federal establishment. His take? Things are not going well. At all. In this regard, you can judge the book by its title: [A Government Ill Executed](#).

Here's what Light wrote in a [piece in The Politico](#) this week:

The problem is that the federal government is perilously close to the breaking point. Unless the next president takes the lead in fixing government, he or she will preside over a string of meltdowns that will make the federal response to Hurricane Katrina look like a minor mistake.

Light's litany of problems the government faces includes:

- Agencies have missions that extend well beyond their resources.
- The federal establishment is "governed by a chain of command that defies logic."
- Political appointees are "selected through a process that guarantees delays, vacancies and embarrassment."
- Many federal employees are "motivated more by pay and compensation than the chance to make a difference."
- The growth in the government contractor establishment has diffused accountability for results.

The Associated Press  
Friday, May 9, 2008

**WASHINGTON:** Daniel Suson has a doctorate in astrophysics and has worked on the superconducting super collider and a forthcoming NASA probe. Now he's heading back to school to take on an even trickier task □ getting elected to public office.

He is among a growing number of scientists who feel slighted and abused in the public debate in recent years and are mobilizing for a new effort to inject "evidence-based decision making" into public policy.

On Saturday, Suson, dean of engineering, mathematics and science at Purdue University Calumet, will join more than 70 other scientists, engineers and students at a hotel at Georgetown University for a crash course on elective politics.

"I've always been interested in politics, but my participation has been limited to yelling at my television," said Jason Haeseler, a Florida engineer and former registered Republican who will take the class and hopes to run for office as an independent.

The workshop includes advice on putting together a campaign staff, raising money, keeping a budget and using the Internet to their advantage. There will be networking and cocktails, staples of Washington politics.

They will also learn the art of dealing with the media and mastering the all-important sound bite □ something of a challenge for scientists more comfortable with the arcane.

Science has become a part of every major issue of modern life, said neurologist Alan Leshner, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"At the same time that's happening, there's increased tensions between science and society," he said.

Scientists cite the debate over global warming as an example of having their insights and warnings cast aside. They have also complained the Bush administration has censored some of their research on warming and endangered species.

Scientists are also pushing hard for a presidential debate this year focusing on climate change and other science issues. So far, they have not persuaded the presidential candidates to agree to the forum.

Rep. Bill Foster, a physicist elected to the House in March as a Democrat from the Illinois district once held by then-Speaker Dennis Hastert, said the push for a larger role for science in politics is important.

"Politicians have thought they could get away with saying things that are quantitatively false," Foster said in an interview Friday.

Foster said he wants more fact and less ideology in political debate. He said the Bush administration's "twisting" and "abusing" of science policy has caused scientists to become more politicized.

The group running the course, Scientists and Engineers for America, doesn't ask political affiliation of its students and has teachers from both parties, said Lesley Stone, a lawyer who runs the organization.

"Scientists are trained to solve problems and use evidence-based decision making and we think those are really useful skills for elected officials to have," she said.

Congress already has a sprinkling of scientists □ three physicists, three chemists, a microbiologist and a biomedical engineer. There are also 13 medical doctors, two dentists, three nurses, two veterinarians, a psychologist, an optometrist and a pharmacist.

That's nothing compared with 215 lawyers.

"Physics is a lot more fun than politics because it presents a great intellectual challenge. You're wrestling with the secrets of nature," said Rep. Vern Ehlers, R-Mich., the most senior of the three physicists. "Politics is not hard. It's learning to work with people."

Ehlers described decision-making in Congress as "irrational" □ not necessarily a bad thing because it may mean the decisions are connected to emotions and people.

Foster, the Illinois Democrat, said he already has seen a difference between his old world of physics and the new one of politics.

"Both worlds are populated by smart people, most of them trying to do the right things," Foster said. "The thought patterns and internal logic of why things happen are very different."

Suson, who recently moved from Texas to Indiana, says he's several years away from a first run for elective office. He worries that politics could be harder than physics: Learning physics went along "a fairly linear progression," he said.

"Politics is not that. You've got to do something that I find a lot of Ph.D.'s don't do well and that's listen," he said. "You have to pay attention to what people want."

But there's a risk, said Paul Light, author of the new book "A Government Ill Executed."

While the public perceives scientists as being objective, Light said he worries "the more active scientists and engineers in the political debate, the more they risk their objectivity."

Paul Bunje, a Californian who earned his doctorate studying snail evolution and works as a policy fellow at the Environmental Protection Agency, hopes Saturday's class isn't about big ideas and concepts.

The scientist in him wants to set the soaring rhetoric aside and learn the practical steps for an eventual dip into elective office.

"Just how different is this from the life of a scientist, and is this something scientists can be good at?" he wondered.

Light said it may mean making some personality changes for the scientists.

"Scientists will have to get rid of their pocket protectors and kind of improve their political skills and get a more visible sense of humor perhaps," Light said. "But I think they'll be fine politicians."

Academics may be used to the "backstabbing" of university life, Light said, but he added that politics includes something scientists could be less familiar with: "backslapping."

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On the Net

Scientists and Engineers for America: <http://sefora.org/>