William J. Clinton
Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials

Harris Wofford

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HARRIS WOFFORD TIMELINE
Prepared by Nitu Bagchi
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1954 Wofford receives his law degree from Yale Law School and Howard University. (Biographical Directory of the United States Congress)


1956-1966 Wofford is Associate Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame Law School. (“Harris Wofford,” University of Maryland College of Behavioral and Social Sciences)

1957 Wofford is Counsel to Father Theodore Hesburgh on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. He edits the Commission’s report to the President and to the Congress. (Harris Wofford, Of Kennedys and Kings, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980, p. 7)

1960

October Wofford, working on the civil rights section of Senator John F. Kennedy’s (D-MA) presidential campaign, convinces Senator Kennedy to call Coretta Scott King, wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, and offer his sympathy and assistance in getting her husband released from a jail in Georgia. This call is seen as instrumental for Kennedy’s election since it earns him support within the African-American community. (Wofford, p. 7; The New York Times, 05/21/1991)

1961 Wofford is appointed Special Assistant to the President for Civil Rights. During this time, he also helps Sargent Shriver with the organization of the Peace Corps. (Wofford, p. 7)

1962-1964 Wofford serves as Peace Corps’ Special Representative for Africa and Director of its Ethiopia program. (Wofford, p. 7)

1966-1970  Wofford works as President of the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury. (*The New York Times*, 05/21/1991)

1970-1978  Wofford is the first male President of Bryn Mawr College. (*The New York Times*, 05/21/1991)

1978  The Committee for the Study of National Service, headed by Wofford, presents its report to Vice President Walter Mondale. The report proposes a decentralized system of national service. Wofford says, “We lost that argument to the manpower professionals and those that believe that our resources should be focused only on the disadvantaged and minorities.” (*The Boston Globe*, 11/29/1992)

1979-1986  Wofford practices law at Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis. (“Harris Wofford,” *University of Maryland College of Behavioral and Social Sciences*)

1986  Wofford is appointed Chairman of the Pennsylvania State Democratic Party. (*Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*)

1987  Wofford is appointed Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry. (*Journal of Commerce*, 06/17/1987)

1991

*April*  U.S. Senator H. John Heinz (R-PA) is killed in a plane crash. Heinz’s death means that Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey (D) can appoint an interim successor to Heinz’s Senate seat. It is assumed that this appointee will be a Democrat. (*The Washington Post*, 04/05/1991)

*May*  Governor Casey appoints Wofford to Heinz’s Senate seat. Wofford plans to be a candidate in the special elections to be held in November to complete Heinz’s unexpired term. (*The Washington Post*, 05/09/1991)

*June*  Wofford is nominated by the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee to be the candidate for the November special election to fill Heinz’s Senate seat. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 06/03/1991)

U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh (R) announces that he will run against Wofford in the November election. (*The Washington Post*, 06/05/1991)

*August*  Paul Begala, Wofford’s Campaign Manager, believes that “a Democrat can win” the Senate seat from Pennsylvania if he focuses on issues like health care and tax cuts for working people. (*The Washington Post*, 08/07/1991)

*September*  The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) decides to borrow funds so it can contribute $500,000 to Wofford’s campaign. Jeff Eller, spokesman
for the DSCC, argues that if Wofford wins the race, “it could create a rising tide in perceptions for the ‘92 cycle. We’d have slayed a giant.” (*The Washington Post*, 09/14/1991)

**November**


**December**

The presidential campaign of Governor Bill Clinton (D-AR) selects James Carville and Paul Begala as general campaign consultants. Clinton Campaign Manager David Wilhelm comments, “Both James and Paul have an uncanny knack and feel for precisely what middle-class American families are thinking and fearing and hoping. That was proven beyond a shadow of a doubt in the Wofford campaign, and I think this is a major boost for us.” (*The New York Times*, 12/02/1991; *The Boston Globe*, 12/03/1991)

**1992**

**January**

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee holds town meetings across the country to focus on the issue of health care. At a town meeting in Pennsylvania, Wofford says he is leaning toward the Democrats’ “play or pay” proposal, which would require employers to provide health insurance or pay an extra tax. He says, “It isn’t as if the country has a blinding light about what should be done. I think it’s pretty clear with this turnout, people have a wakeup call. They think something needs to be done and they are disagreeing about it.” (*USA Today*, 01/16/1992)

Wofford and Clinton address the annual convention of the Coalition for Democratic Values. Wofford says that Americans are ready for a liberal agenda but advises candidates to drive home a few important issues rather than speaking of an entire platform. Clinton emphasizes that job creation and not social spending is the key to helping the poor. (*The Boston Globe*, 01/26/1992)

**April**

Wofford and Senator Thomas A. Daschle (D-SD) introduce a national health bill. Under the plan, an independent federal board will decide each year how much should be spent on health care. The costs will be covered by an income-based progressive “premium” or tax on individuals and an impost on employers, plus the money now spent for Medicare, Medicaid and other health programs. The money will be distributed to the states, with each state supplementing the federal grant with a 20 percent match. (*The Washington Post*, 04/03/1992)

Wofford endorses Clinton for President and promises action on health care, middle-class income tax cuts and fair trade. As Clinton gets ready to campaign in Pennsylvania, Wofford’s endorsement is seen as giving him a political edge in the state. (*Houston Chronicle*, 04/08/1992)
May

There is growing speculation that Wofford is being considered to be Clinton’s vice-presidential candidate. (*The Boston Globe*, 05/17/1992)

July

Newspapers speculate that Wofford’s chances of being picked as Clinton’s running mate have diminished after the Supreme Court upheld parts of a Pennsylvania law restricting abortion. Clinton says that his ticket will be pro-choice, while Wofford supports some restrictions on abortion. (*The Washington Post*, 07/07/1992)

It is reported that Clinton has met with Wofford and Senator Robert Graham (D-FL) in Washington. There is speculation that this is in regard to picking his running mate. (*The Washington Post*, 07/08/1992)

Wofford campaigns with Clinton in Pennsylvania. He tells reporters that he expects the Republicans will counter Clinton through negative advertising in the state. Wofford says, “It doesn’t work . . . when such fundamental forces are at work as in an economy that has gone wrong.” Comparing Clinton to President John F. Kennedy, he says both men are characterized by “the spirit of boldness, and ingenuity and a lot of laughter.” (*The Boston Globe*, 07/19/1992)

October

Days before the election, Clinton’s staff still refuses to discuss a possible Clinton Administration. Wofford says any claims of a mandate should be made by Mr. Clinton’s supporters in Congress, rather than by the candidate himself. (*The New York Times*, 10/25/1992)

November

Wofford says that some sort of a national service program will definitely be a part of the Clinton Administration’s agenda. “It’s a way to reach at-risk kids dropping out of school and to reach college-bound kids headed into a life of civic indifference,” says Wofford. Having worked with Clinton on a task force on national service for the National Governors Association, Wofford hopes and believes the President-elect will endorse a flexible plan where almost any organization could submit a plan, be certified and receive vouchers with which to pay its volunteers. (*The Boston Globe*, 11/29/1992)

1993

January

Wofford is appointed to serve on the Labor and Human Resources Committee. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 01/08/1993)

February

The Clinton Administration launches a coordinated nationwide campaign to sell its health care plan. In connection with this effort, First Lady Hillary Clinton’s first trip will be to Harrisburg, PA, to address a statewide conference on health care sponsored by Wofford. (*The Washington Post*, 02/06/1993)

March

President Clinton unveils his national service proposal, which he describes as the 1990s version of the Peace Corps. Few details of the actual plan are announced
besides a pilot program to begin in the summer for 1,000 young people. The first-year costs of the program are estimated at $400 million for 25,000 participants, growing to $3.4 billion for 100,000 participants in 1997. Participants are expected to be able to trade one year of community service for two years of college or other training costs. These details are expected to be worked out later through the legislative process. (*The Washington Post*, 03/02/1993)

Wofford says that Clinton’s proposed national service program with its 100,000 students will dwarf the Peace Corps. Wofford says he, like Clinton, now believes that national service should be decentralized, drawing on the expertise of local communities and agencies, rather than relying on the federal bureaucracy. (*The New York Times*, 03/03/1993)

**May**

Clinton visits Philadelphia to speak about his health care plan and to campaign for Wofford in his upcoming reelection bid. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 05/29/1993)

**June**

Members of the Clinton Administration testify before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee about the Administration’s national service proposal. Wofford, a co-sponsor of the bill, says that the President’s intent is to supplement, not replace, existing federal programs. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 06/09/1993)

**July**


Senate Democrats agree to scale back President Clinton’s national service plan in the face of a potential filibuster by Republicans who complain about its cost. Negotiators decide to shorten the term of the program from five to three years and tax the stipends received by wealthier students. Wofford says he believes a compromise is “reachable if the Republicans don’t impose the discipline of a filibuster.” (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 07/28/1993)

**September**

Wofford opposes the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because it would damage his state’s economy. Wofford says that his state has lost thousands of high-paying manufacturing jobs in recent years and that under NAFTA the enticement of low-cost labor in Mexico could mean increased unemployment for the United States. (*The New York Times*, 09/04/1993)

The Senate passes the national service bill by a vote of 57 to 40. The final version approves a $1.5 billion, three-year program. (*The New York Times*, 09/08/1993)

**1994**

**February**

The Senate adopts two education bills, both co-sponsored by Wofford, which set new learning standards for all pupils and change the way in which schools teach
vocational skills. It is reported that, once the House and the Senate bills are reconciled, the bills will emerge from Congress largely as fashioned by aides to President Clinton. (*Houston Chronicle*, 02/09/1994)

**May**

U.S. Representative Rick Santorum (R) defeats Joseph Watkins, a former aide to President George Bush, to win the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate race in Pennsylvania. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 05/11/1994)

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee begin considering health care legislation. Wofford says, “What we need in the end is bipartisan support, but it doesn’t have to come this week.” (*The Washington Post*, 05/19/1994)

**June**

Wofford predicts “a standoff on the floor” of the Senate if the health care legislation includes abortion services in it. Wofford wants the bill to allow insurers to decide whether they want to cover the procedure. (*The New York Times*, 06/07/1994)

**August**

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) says that the Senate will recess without enacting health care legislation. Wofford believes that a scaled back version of health care legislation could have passed. (*The Washington Post*, 08/26/1994)

**September**

AmeriCorps, the organization created to implement Clinton’s national service plan, swears in its first 20,000 volunteers. Wofford says, “I would love to see service -- whether community service or service overseas -- as a common expectation for young people, a routine rite of passage.” (*The Washington Post*, 09/12/1994)

Health care becomes a major campaign issue in the Wofford-Santorum race. Neil Newhouse, Santorum’s pollster, says the failure of health care speaks to Wofford’s lack of achievement. Paul Begala, Wofford’s political advisor, says Wofford will focus on the “hypocrisy” of Santorum who “killed health care for ordinary Americans” but receives government health care. (*The Washington Post*, 09/28/1994)

**October**


**November**

Wofford loses his Senate seat to Santorum. Democratic pollster Michael Donilon says he is sure that Wofford would have won if the health care bill had been passed. (*The Washington Post*, 11/09/1994; *Houston Chronicle*, 11/16/1994)
Wofford: 1995-1997

1995

June

Wofford is appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National Service (CNS), replacing Eli Segal. This is the corporation which heads AmeriCorps and the national service program. *(The Washington Post, 06/05/1995)*

September

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee unanimously approves Wofford as CEO of CNS. *(The Washington Post, 09/27/1994)*

October

Wofford is sworn in as the new CEO of CNS. *(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 10/15/1995)*

Wofford joins Clinton at a White House event welcoming a new class of AmeriCorps recruits. Clinton asks the Congress to keep funding the program. Wofford says that the program will survive once its supporters can “persuade people that at a time when [Republicans] are dismantling government . . . here is a lean alternative.” *(The Washington Post, 10/13/1995)*

1996

March

Wofford and Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) announce that they have forged an agreement that will lead to Congress’ providing the money to operate AmeriCorps. Wofford has pledged to raise more private money while Grassley says he’s a supporter of a series of reforms that would reduce the cost per participant from $27,000 to $17,000. *(Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 03/17/1996)*

December

The media speculates over who will replace Robert Reich as U.S. Labor Secretary. Wofford is said to be one of the top contenders for the post along with Alexis Herman, Director of the White House Public Liaison Office. It is reported that Wofford is the leading choice of the AFL-CIO. Wofford says, “I’m absolutely not campaigning for this job. Night and day, I’m doing the job I have now – my longstanding addiction to national service. I don’t want to respond to questions about a new job.” *(Houston Chronicle, 12/05/1996)*

1997

January

Clinton announces that he and former Presidents George Bush, Jimmy Carter, and Gerald Ford will hold a three-day summit meeting on community service in Philadelphia in the spring. The conference will be headed by Gen. Colin L. Powell. Wofford works with the Points of Light Foundation to develop a five-point list of goals for the conference, intended to promote mentoring relationships between adults and teen-agers, provide immunization and other health services to children, encourage education and job skills, and provide structured recreational activities and opportunities for community service by young people themselves. *(The New York Times, 01/24/1997)*
March
Wofford is one of four panelists at a town meeting at the annual Forging New Links Statewide Conference in Ohio, a coalition of 11 organizations committed to volunteerism, community service and service learning. He says that statewide organizations should work together towards a clear goal. (Columbus Dispatch, 03/23/1997)

April
The President’s Summit for America’s Future begins. Speaking at the summit, Wofford says, “We want commitments that will change the tide for children in this country.” (Plain Dealer-Cleveland, 04/27/1997)

August
The House Committee on Education and the Workforce criticizes Wofford for the poor record-keeping and financial accountability of CNS. Wofford responds that he has been instrumental in getting CNS on a sounder financial footing. (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 08/10/1997)

1998

January
Wofford and Clinton observe Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by painting walls and repairing classrooms in dilapidated public high schools in Washington. (Times-Picayune, 01/20/1998)

May
Gen. Colin Powell’s national program to find mentors for needy children starts its summit in Tampa, Florida. Wofford addresses the summit. (The Tampa Tribune, 05/29/1998)

June
In a speech given to volunteers at John Carroll University, Clinton compares AmeriCorps to the Peace Corps and the GI Bill. Clinton says, “Out of AmeriCorps has come a blending of the two, taking the idea of service and the idea of education – it’s almost like the Peace Corps comes home, in larger numbers - with a GI educational bill for citizen service.” Speaking of the need for continued financial support to AmeriCorps, Wofford says that the current budget for AmeriCorps is $685 million and Clinton is requesting that the figure be increased by $96 million. (Plain Dealer-Cleveland, 06/04/1998)

1999

January
Speaking at a forum, Representative Dan Miller (R-FL) says that he will use volunteers from AmeriCorps to help with the 2000 census. Wofford is “delighted that Congressman Miller has joined the chorus of people who were skeptical about Americorps coming to see its value and need.” (The New York Times, 01/27/1999)

February
Clinton attends a rally at the University of Maryland to build support for AmeriCorps. He calls on young people to join the program, saying he wants to increase the number of volunteers from 40,000 to 100,000 by 2002. (The Washington Post, 02/11/1999).
May

Auditors of CNS testify before the House Education Committee saying that the Corporation still has serious problems with financial management. Committee Chairman Peter Hoekstra (R-MI) says, “There is progress but we haven’t solved the problem.” Wofford says that the agency has made steady progress in recent years and is “within striking distance” of solving its outstanding financial management issues. But installation of a program to modernize accounting and funds control has been delayed until July to minimize disruptions and to permit certain grants to get out on time. (The Boston Globe, 05/06/1999)
TIMELINES

• Harris Wofford Timeline, prepared by Nitu Bagchi, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/02/2006.

• Timeline of the Clinton Presidency, prepared by Robbie Robinson, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/30/2002.

SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY HARRIS WOFFORD


1991 Senate Race and the 1992 Presidential Campaign


Health Care Policy


National Service


CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

- Joe Frolik, “Volunteers Head Home, Unsure of What’s Next,” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), 04/30/1997.
HARRIS WOFFORD SUGGESTED TOPICS
Prepared by Nitu Bagchi
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 06/27/2006

Origins of Relationship with Clinton
• When did you first meet Bill Clinton? What were your early impressions of him?

United States Senator
• Discuss the development of health care as a central issue in your 1991 campaign.
• Evaluate the strategy you, James Carville, and Paul Begala developed to run against Richard Thornburgh.
• How did your 1991 Senate campaign impact your views of the candidates in the 1992 presidential election? Did you discuss health care and national service with Clinton before you endorsed him in the 1992 campaign?
• Discuss your role in the 1992 presidential campaign. How often did you see Clinton? What were your impressions of Clinton as a candidate?
• Describe your meeting with Clinton as a potential vice-presidential candidate? Were you offered any other positions in the new Administration?
• Discuss your interactions with Clinton during your tenure in the Senate. How often and under what circumstances would you meet? Did you propose policy ideas to the President?
• Comment on the development of health care policy in the Senate under Clinton. How did Clinton respond to the earlier Wofford-Daschle proposal? How well was the Kennedy-Mitchell bill received inside the Senate?
• Discuss on your interactions with Mrs. Clinton? Did you work with her on health care policy? What impact did Mrs. Clinton’s task force, organized by Ira Magaziner, have on health care policy considerations in the Senate?
• Comment on discussions between the House and Senate on health care policy. Where were the conflicts?
• Why did health care legislation stall in 1994? How did the Clinton health care plan affect the 1994 election?
• Discuss your involvement in the debate over the formation of AmeriCorps. To what extent did you help to guide the national service plan through the Senate?
• How would you characterize Clinton’s relationship with the Congress during this time? How did this change after the 1994 midterm elections?

Corporation for National Service
• How did you come to be appointed as the CEO for the Corporation for National Service (CNS)? Did you have any discussions with the President regarding his expectations for AmeriCorps prior to your appointment?
• Describe your duties as the CEO of CNS. With whom did you work most closely inside and outside the White House?
• Explain how the AmeriCorps program linked up with established volunteer organizations and foundations.
• Describe your oversight duties for AmeriCorps, VISTA, and the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps.
• Discuss the opposition to AmeriCorps and how you developed a coalition to preserve the program. Explain how you attempted to win over Republican support. Did your previous Senate experience help you in this regard?
• Discuss the President’s Summit for America’s Future. What were your goals in organizing the conference?

The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect
• What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as U.S. Senator and the CEO of CNS? What were the most challenging aspects of these positions?
• What were Clinton’s greatest assets as President? Assess his strengths and weaknesses as a domestic policymaker, a legislative leader, and a leader of public opinion. Which of his attributes served him best during his presidency?
• What features of the Clinton Presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
• How should the Clinton presidency be viewed in history? What episodes or events are especially instructive or revealing for the historian trying to assess this presidency?