William J. Clinton
Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials

Elaine Kamarck

May 7-8, 2008

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April 2008
ELAINE KAMARCK NEWS TIMELINE
Prepared by Monica Gray
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 12/12/2007

1992

November
Elaine Kamarck, a senior fellow and co-founder of the Democratic Leadership Council’s (DLC) Progressive Policy Institute (PPI), suggests a political strategy and policy-agenda for president-elect Bill Clinton. In the DLC’s book *Mandate for Change*, Kamarck and William Galston assert that failure to unite the Democratic Party within Clinton’s first 100 days in office “would all but ensure the resurgence of a fragmented, interest-group-based agenda and of the forces that undermined the presidency of Jimmy Carter.” They add that “Clinton did not have the opportunity to encounter and overcome the most forceful advocates of the traditional Democratic Party. The absence of a clear-cut, climactic ideological battle for the nomination leaves Bill Clinton with a coalition that may be less committed to his [agenda] than he is himself.” *(The Washington Post, 11/12/1992)*

1993

January
President Clinton holds an economic conference in Little Rock, AR, to devise a plan to bring the country out of the recession. Kamarck, working for the PPI, argues that the new Clinton Administration should make future economic prosperity its top priority. She tells Clinton that he, like the presidents before him, will have up to six months to make unfavorable political decisions, after which point his presidential “honeymoon” will end. Kamarck warns Clinton that the “…honeymoon lasts six months if you’re lucky. You have a window of opportunity to achieve real progress on the long-term problems that we’ve heard about in the last two days. If you look at the four sectors of this Budget, every single one of them is a political nightmare that you will have to get through to make honest-to-goodness, long-term deficit reduction.” *(The Sydney Morning Herald – Australia, 01/30/1993)*

Of the fifteen authors of the PPI’s *Mandate for Change*, only William Galston has been offered a position, as Clinton’s domestic policy adviser. Kamarck partnered with Galston to write the family policy section of the book, which Clinton instructed his staff to read. “From blind quotes in the newspapers, I understand that they [the Administration] don’t want anybody in these jobs who have their own agenda, which I guess means me,” says Kamarck. “Funny, I thought my agenda was Clinton’s agenda, but maybe I was wrong.” *(The Washington Times, 01/25/1993, 01/31/1993)*

March
President Clinton announces a “Reinventing Government” initiative, placing Vice-President Gore in charge of moving the effort forward; and Kamarck is appointed Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice-President. Clinton proclaims that the

**July**  
Clinton announces his intent to utilize modern technology and corporate management techniques to minimize government bureaucracy and maximize entrepreneurship in government. Kamarck says that “taxpayers feel they are getting K-mart government at Saks Fifth Avenue prices.” She claims that the “big question” in terms of government reinvention is how to “make government accountable without adding significant costs.” (*Business Week*, 07/05/1993)

**September**  
Vice-President Gore releases a blueprint for the government reinvention project, formally entitled the *National Performance Review* (NPR). Kamarck is appointed head of the NPR task force. Gore states that the NPR “represents the beginning of what will be—what must be—an ongoing commitment to change. It includes actions that will be taken now, by directive of the president; actions that will be taken by cabinet secretaries and agency heads; and recommendations for congressional action.” He adds that the NPR will focus “primarily on how government should work, not on what it should do.” (Galston and Tibbetts, p.25)

Gore declares that the White House will partner with Congress and interest groups to eliminate government inefficiencies identified in the NPR. Senator Phil Gramm (R-TX) says he supports executive efforts to “reinvent” government, and the media reports that he is expected to propose a 2000 deadline for the White House to meet the NPR’s goal of reducing the federal workforce by 252,000 people. Kamarck opposes Gramm’s deadline proposition. She argues that the Administration is not “just streamlining the bureaucracy” but that her NPR task force aims “to reengineer it.” The ultimate goal, according to Kamarck, is to carefully identify “the layers that don’t make any damn sense.” (*The Boston Globe*, 09/19/1993)

**November**  
The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) protests the NPR because it recommends that the RRB be eliminated and its duties shifted to other federal agencies. President Clinton assures the retirees that no matter which government agency oversees the RRB, its members will not sacrifice any benefits. Kamarck maintains that the Review’s recommendation “has nothing to do with the real benefits people receive, but how they are administered.”(*The Washington Post*, 11/11/1993)

**1994**

**February**  
In response to accusations that “reinventing government” will not lessen the budget deficit, Kamarck asserts: “Savings are savings. We never said this was for deficit reduction.”(*The Washington Times*, 02/04/1994)
April

The Office of Personal Management (OPM) and the Department of Defense host the grand opening of the first “paperless personnel office” near the Pentagon in Virginia. The modern office is one of 130 “reinvention laboratories” across the country devised by the Clinton Administration to reduce costs and “streamline the personnel network.” According to Kamarck, the event is meant to “show the rest of the government that this [modern office] is not pie in the sky…This is not passing fancy. This is real.” *(States News Service, 04/11/1994)*

May

The Congressional Black Caucus objects to the NPR’s plan to reduce federal government positions. The group claims that the report unjustly targets minority employees. Kamarck says such accusations are “somewhat unjustified,” and she argues that many white males in top governmental positions will lose their jobs. “With older people near retirement leaving, it creates mobility in middle-and upper-management….We think streamlining and buyouts and early retirements will contribute enormously to minority advancement.” *(The Times Union, 05/08/1994)*

The NPR partners with the National Partnership Council (NPC), an advisory committee created by Clinton to improve federal labor leadership, to endorse a universal government incentive program to improve federal workers’ performance. Kamarck argues that there exists a “compelling need” to alter the current incentive procedure. She says bonuses are “being given out so widely it does call into question whether they’re being used to reward performance or to just give some people raises.” *(States News Service, 05/10/1994; The Washington Post, 05/11/1994)*

September

The Brookings Institution issues a report assessing the Administration’s first year efforts to “reinvent” government. Highlighting the NPR’s commitment to reduce the federal civilian workforce by 272,900 positions, the elimination of the Federal Personnel Manual and the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s regional offices, Brookings finds the NPR to be “one of the most lively management reforms in American history.” In reference to reinvention, Kamarck states: “We really are shrinking it [the federal government], and the positions will not be coming back…Pretty soon people will notice the change for the better when they renew their passports, call the IRS, or go to V.A. hospitals.” *(Christian Science-Monitor, 08/22/1994; San Jose Mercury News, 09/02/1994)*

December

Federal union leaders, concerned over the job security of high-profile federal union workers, ask to have a greater role in shaping labor legislation. Kamarck says the Administration has met with corporate executives and has goals to “make the Civil Service system easier to operate…to make it easier to hire people, easier to fire people who aren’t doing a good job and…to create a more flexible work force.” She adds that while the “targeted group for streamlining” is not typically union workers, “at times when we do a drastic reorganization it will be.” *(The Associated Press, 12/12/1994)*
January

The AP reports that forty-eight countries have sent representatives to D.C. to observe U.S. government reform initiatives, which Kamarck thinks will “change everything we do.” The NPR has been translated into Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Korean. Kamarck predicts Republicans will advocate more governmental reductions, but ultimately she suspects that the Clinton Administration will “draw lines.” Kamarck says it “may sound easy to kill the Transportation Department until you look at what’s in it and then you say, ‘Wait a minute. There are safety functions in here.’ Do the American people really want us to get rid of the Federal Aviation Administration? I don’t think so.” (The Associated Press, 01/21/1995)

March

A “Rethinking FERC” commission is created after the NPR asks the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to conduct a review of each of its programs. The commission is considering two differing processes for regulatory reform: one from Congress and the other from the White House. Congress suggests the reform process begin with an extended halt on new regulations. The Administration advocates a “fundamental restructuring” of specific federal agencies. In reference to the new Republican leadership in Congress and regulation reform, Kamarck says, “They talk a lot about it. We deliver.” She adds that the Administration believes that the reinvention approach will “be better and more real than a gimmick like a moratorium or any of the other things they’ve been talking about.” (Inside FERC, 03/06/1995)

Clinton requests a $13 billion cut from four federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration, the Interior Department, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Republicans who advocate more extensive reductions in the federal bureaucracy argue that Clinton has not adequately reduced government programs. The Administration claims Republicans are immorally targeting school lunch, education, and youth anti-drug education. The President maintains that the government can be reduced “without a mean spirit or meat ax.” Kamarck encourages reporters to compare Clinton’s proposal to GOP budget cuts, and she says, “We are not looking to cut school lunches...to cut women, infants and children’s food supplements.” (The Associated Press, 03/27/1995)

May

Two years after the “reinvention” of government project was launched, the Clinton Administration reports that it is pleased with the program’s progress. In fiscal 1994, the executive branch’s workforce was reduced to approximately 2.05 million, and, according to Kamarck, “Nothing has helped our credibility more on [reinventing government] than the fact that government is 102,000 people smaller.” (Government Executive, 05/1995)

The Administration plans to restructure the Department of Health and Human Services by eliminating headquarters’ workers, combining programs, and giving states more power in the health care arena. The NPR calls for an investigation to
determine whether certain hospitals at the National Institutes of Health should be
turned over to private supervision. Kamarck explains that the goal of the public-
private partnerships is to “make sure the money is spent on the problems the
federal government identifies, with local flexibility and tailored to local needs.”
(The Associated Press, 05/11/1995)

June

The White House instructs three federal agencies to stop requiring companies to
submit tax and wage documentation repeatedly. The proposed legislation is
intended to help businesses file tax and wage information simultaneously to
federal and state offices. The proposal should “organize the tax and wage
reporting requirements ...for the convenience of the small business person and the
individual - and not for the convenience of the government,” states Kamarck. The
consolidation is expected to save taxpayers $1.5 million and cut $300 million
from the federal budget in five years. “We’re not promising a miracle tomorrow,”
says Kamarck, “but we are painting a vision and we hope all the agencies and the
states will get on board so this will be a reality in a couple of years.” (The
Associated Press, 06/08/1995)

October

Pressured by the U.S. tourist industry, federal inspectors attempt to improve
airport inspection standards to make entering the U.S. a more efficient process for
international travelers. “Complaints about [the relationship between] Customs and
INS have dated back to Teddy Roosevelt,” says Kamarck. “At one point, we were
ready to propose just one border agency. But then everybody screamed bloody
murder…. One thing is clear. We need to bring them into the 21st century and get
rid of the bureaucratic glut.” (The Washington Post, 10/30/1995)

December

The House Government Reform and Oversight Committee supports a report
recommending that the Office of Management and Budget be divided, and that a
single “Office of Management,” led by an official with direct access to Clinton,
be put in its place. The new office would unite OMB’s management duties, the
policy and oversight roles of the Office of Personnel Management and the policy
portion of the General Services Administration. Kamarck is opposed to this
suggestion, for “the notion of discussing management in the absence of budget is
naive. . . . To separate [management] out is to put it in a place where it has no
power. You have something that is easily ignored.” (The Washington Post,
12/15/1995)

1996

March

The White House holds a weeklong series of public relations events to highlight
the success of its “reinventing government” project, which is credited with having
eliminated approximately 250,000 jobs. In an interview arranged by the
Republican National Committee, Representative Mark Neumann (R-WI) claims
the “problem” with reinvention is that “two-thirds of that [downsizing] is defense
shrinkage.” Kamarck insists the reductions have enabled the Administration to
add positions to specific departments, particularly Justice, where thousands of law
enforcement jobs have been created. “We are not at all embarrassed to tell the
American people we are adding personnel to fight crime,” she states. (*The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 03/27/1996)

**April**

Six years after President Bush organized the first governor’s meeting in Charlottesville, Va., to discuss education reform, President Clinton and forty-four governors, each accompanied by at least one corporate leader, meet in Palisades, NY, for a follow-up meeting. The two main goals of the summit are to narrow the broad education standards set in the 1989 meeting, and to bring more technology into schools. Following the governors’ meeting, *The Washington Post* writes that the Kamarck and Galston proposal to direct a significant amount of tax relief toward families who fall in middle-and lower-income brackets and who have children under six years of age, is the “most constructive” tax-cut proposal to help the education crisis. (*The New York Times*, 03/26/1996; *The Washington Post*, 04/02/1996)

**August**

In response to the July 17, 1996 explosion of TWA Flight 800, the Gore Commission on Aviation Safety and Security is created to devise a plan for a “national explosives detection system.” The Commission is considering recommending an extensive new bomb-detecting system which, by using computer image profiles of passengers, would be used to spot potential terrorists. Though there are concerns regarding privacy rights, Kamarck says that “Anyone who has thought this through realizes that (passenger) profiling has to be part of the way we resolve the dilemmas inherent in creating an explosive detection system.” (*The Washington Post*, 08/30/1996)

**October**

Congressional Republicans, backed by investigators for the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, claim that Gore has collaborated with a program called “Citizenship USA” in an attempt to naturalize more than one million people in an illegal effort to help Clinton in the November election. House Republicans claim Gore sent a memo to Clinton suggesting strategies to “lower standards for citizenship,” and they are insisting on obtaining a copy. The White House refuses to comply. Kamarck claims the program is structured merely to eliminate excess accumulation of naturalization-seeking immigrant applications. “If this had happened in 1993, 1994 or 1995, we would have done exactly the same thing,” she maintains. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 10/07/1996)

**November**

In the fourth report on the Administration’s “government reinvention” project, released in September in Portland, OR, Gore announces that since 1993, the Administration has saved $118 billion and eliminated 240,000 federal positions. But the General Accounting Office (GAO) concludes that the majority of agencies did not reach benchmarks for reducing management, and that numerous agencies “reclassified supervisors as non-supervisors.” Further, the GAO contends that a consequence of job cuts has been that agencies have consistencies in skill-level that prevent them from achieving necessary objectives. Kamarck refutes the GAO’s assertion: “This notion that you sort of do this elaborate plan and then you cut is purely an academic notion…Everyone downsizes and reengineers simultaneously.” (*Government Executive*, 11/1996)
The British press reports that education reform is slated as the top priority of Clinton’s second term. The Administration intends to extend the traditional length of education to fourteen years, and make two years of vocational training or college education the standard for every “school-leaver.” “The whole package of education reforms has to happen, so we can make sure we are not turning into an old-fashioned European class system, where the children of people at the bottom stay at the bottom....We need to maintain what is the great strength of America - the class mobility,” says Kamarck. *(The Guardian - London, 11/20/1996)*

### January

*The New York Times* reports that sixteen thousand pages of rules have been eliminated from the Code of Federal Regulations, and 115 businesses have enrolled in the Occupational Safety & Health Administration’s Voluntary Protection Program, which excuses industries from standard inspections if they reach required safety standards. Kamarck says the Administration is striving to change “the mindset of regulators from that of cops to making sure that people are complying with the law. That is a big, big change.” Historically, according to Kamarck, regulation policy has been so controversial because of “the feeling by business people that a lot of regulatory actions are capricious and coercive.” *(The New York Times, 01/31/1997)*

### February

Vice-President Gore’s Commission on Airline Safety and Security, established by Clinton in the summer of 1996 in response to a ValuJet and TWA Flight 800 accidents, submits its official report on aviation security. Kamarck, serving on the commission, chaired by Gore, says that the President requested that the commission focus on “terrorism, safety, and air traffic control.” “One thing that the Vice-President has always been careful about is we promise what we know we can deliver, and that’s what we’ve done in this report.” (“Securing the Skies,” *PBS Online News Hour*, 02/12/1997).

### April

Kamarck leads an initiative to end the nation’s 61-year tradition of guaranteed welfare. The plan involves shifting two million citizens from welfare to work, and Clinton vows to hire at least 10,000 welfare recipients over the next four years. If executed properly, the plan will make the federal government the number one employer of workers who were laid off as a result of the NPR’s government downsizing. Some private industry executives and welfare experts fear the plan will primarily create short-term jobs. Kamarck recognizes that many of the low-level positions will be temporary, but she warns critics to “not underestimate the value of a temporary job if you’ve never had a job.” *(USA Today, 04/11/1997)*

Kamarck accepts a position to direct Visions of Governance for the 21st Century at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Beginning in September 1997, she will serve as a lecturer and “take charge of a multi-year project that seeks to shape and improve public debate about the role of government.” *(The Boston Globe, 04/11/1997)*
June  The GAO reports that 93% of the NPR’s initial proposals have been at least partially implemented. Consequently, the federal government is smaller than it has been in over thirty years, and it has recorded more than $30 billion in net savings. Kamarck says the Review’s “challenge ahead” is to distribute more far-reaching, clearly visible changes for the public in order “to move the whole effort from a series of experiments to how government normally runs.” (Financial Times – London, 06/09/1997)

September  Gore announces that Morley Winograd will replace Kamarck as his senior policy adviser and he will serve as the director of the NPR. (U.S. Newswire, 09/11/1997)

1999

November  Even after Kamarck officially leaves the White House as Gore’s advisor and moves on to a faculty position at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, she continues to advise Gore as he begins his presidential campaign. In November, Gore turns to Tony Coelho to revamp his campaign by giving Coelho significant powers to shake up the campaign staff and to reorganize the campaign strategy. Coelho relocates the campaign office to Nashville. Donna Brazile, the campaign manager, Carter Eskew, the new campaign spokesman, and Kathleen Begala, the newly hired communications director, move to Tennessee with Coelho, with Kamarck, Gore’s main domestic policy advisor, reportedly planning to move in January. (The Washington Post, 11/10/1999)

2000

July  A profile piece in The Boston Globe explores Kamarck’s role in Gore’s campaign, as well as her relationship both to the candidate and to his other staff members. The article emphasizes her role both in attempting to provide Gore with objective policy advice, untainted from his political operatives, as well as promoting the centrist policies of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), with which she has close ties. The article portrays Gore’s decision-making style as one in which he believes in creative tension among his advisers, refereeing the clashing views of various aides. He does not like to invest any one person with the power to control how information gets to him and how his options are framed. As one of only two high-powered women in a thoroughly male-dominated campaign, Kamarck is frequently described by her colleagues as having a potent personality that can rub some the wrong way. But she can also be warm and effusive. “She is one of those people who understands the importance of ideas in politics,” says Al From, president of the DLC. “In the Gore campaign, she has to go through a lot of battles. Most of those consultants don’t have the appreciation for ideas that she has.” (The Boston Globe, 07/18/2000)

August  Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph I. Lieberman once favored exploring the idea of partially privatizing Social Security, a key proposal of Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush. But in the last year Lieberman came to agree with Vice President Gore that the GOP plan poses a
financial risk to retirees. Republicans have recently been publicizing positions Lieberman has taken in the past that are similar to those policies promoted by Bush, including Lieberman’s strong support for a missile defense system, willingness to experiment with school vouchers, criticism of affirmative action and more restrictive view of the kind of parental notification necessary for minors to receive abortions. But perhaps the most threatening issue for Gore’s candidacy is Social Security. Gore argues that Bush’s plan to privatize Social Security could threaten the government retirement program and endanger retirees’ savings. Republicans point to a 1998 interview with Lieberman in which he states, “I think...that individual control of part of the retirement/Social Security funds has to happen.” However, Lieberman says his interest in privatizing Social Security was a passing dalliance. In a newspaper column that Lieberman wrote in June, he explains his changing views: “As the public debate about privatizing Social Security has intensified, I have been thinking about my personal journey down the path of privatization. I began with fascination, which led to exploration, then apprehension and ultimately rejection. . . . The more I weighed these facts, the more reluctant I became to tamper with the program’s basic structure.” Lieberman wrote the column after Kamarck asked him and about 20 other Democratic leaders to make statements criticizing Bush’s Social Security proposal. (The Washington Post, 08/10/2000)
TIMELINES

• Elaine Kamarck News Timeline, prepared by Monica Gray, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 12/27/2007.

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

Selected Writings and Public Statements by Elaine Kamarck


1992 Campaign and Transition


SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR TO THE VICE-PRESIDENT:
MANAGING THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW (NPR)

Relations with Congress


Downsizing the Federal Workforce


National Partnership Council


Merger: USIA and ACDA into State Department


OSHA


Coordination of Customs and INS at U.S. Ports of Entry

Education Reform

Manager: Vice-President’s Commission on Airline Safety and Security

Welfare Reform
GORE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN 2000


Elaine Kamarck Suggested Topics
Prepared by Monica Gray
Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 12/12/2007

Presidential Campaign (1992), Transition, and Joining the Administration
- When did you initially meet Bill Clinton? Al Gore? Describe your first impressions of each.
- Describe your early engagement with the New Democratic movement? Are there aspects of the development of that movement that are insufficiently appreciated or misunderstood? How important was Bill Clinton in the development and evolution of this movement? What role did this movement play in electing Clinton president?
- Why did you decline an offer to join the 1992 campaign staff? Did you have reservations about joining the White House staff?
- Discuss your efforts in the transition to help establish the administration’s governing agenda for the first year.

Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice-President: Managing the National Performance Review
- Discuss your appointment and responsibilities as Senior Policy Advisor to the Vice-President. What understandings, if any, did you have in advance about your place in the staff structure and access to the Vice-President?
- What issues occupied most of your time?
- Describe the circumstances under which you were appointed manager of the Administration’s National Performance Review (NPR)? What were the core objectives of the NPR? How well did the NPR succeed in achieving these goals?
- Comment on Gore’s working relationship with President Clinton, and the extent to which the President delegated power to the Vice-President. Were there issue groups over which Gore was given principle authority?
- Characterize Gore’s relationship with the media and constituency groups. Discuss his role in congressional relations for the administration.
- Discuss how you went about designing a strategic plan, both politically and logistically, to downsize the federal government. How did the Administration’s approach to downsizing compare to the ideas of congressional Republicans? How did you attempt to frame the rationale for job cuts in the media?
- Describe some of the private sector strategies employed by the NPR. (customer service, partnership councils, performance agreements). Describe the objectives of the Hammer Award Program and the Reinvention Laboratory program. In your view, what role did rewards for innovation and experimentation play in making government more efficient?
- Describe the first-term evolution of the Clinton presidency’s relationship with the Democratic Leadership Council and the leaders of the New Democratic movement. On what issues were the differences most pronounced?
- How consequential was the 1994 loss of Congress to the administration in general, and more specifically to you in your own issue areas?
Re-election (1996) and Second Term Key Policy Issues

- Did you have any formal or informal role in the 1996 re-election effort? To what extent was the Vice President distracted or thrown off balance by charges of campaign improprieties in 1996?
- Discuss the objectives of the Aviation Security Commission. In which areas did the FAA under the Clinton Administration succeed in offering a systematic approach to aviation security where previous administrations had not?
- Comment on your involvement in education reform. Highlight successes and challenges associated with your efforts to implement a more competitive education marketplace.
- Describe your goals and responsibilities as a member of Clinton’s welfare reform task force. Evaluate the effectiveness of Clinton’s welfare-to-work initiative.

Departure and Gore 2000

- What prompted you to leave the Administration and accept a full-time position at the Kennedy School of Government in 1997? What role did you play as an outside White House policy advisor following your departure?
- Discuss your role as Gore’s 2000 campaign policy director. Give us your assessment of that campaign in retrospect. What worked and what did not? Was Gore in fact reluctant to deploy President Clinton on his behalf in 2000? Are there aspects of the post-election struggle in Florida that are unknown or misunderstood?

The Clinton-Gore Administration in Retrospect

- Discuss in general terms the unique characteristics of Gore’s vice-presidency. Comment also on the strengths and weaknesses of Gore in the White House and on the campaign trail.
- What do you consider Clinton’s greatest assets as President? Gauge his strengths and weaknesses as a policymaker, a legislative leader, and a party leader. Was the Democratic Party left stronger or weaker as a result of the Clinton presidency?
- What features of the Clinton-Gore Administration were misunderstood by the media?