

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 21, 2009

The President today signed two Executive Orders and three Presidential Memoranda. These five documents represent a bold first step to fulfill his campaign promises to make government more responsible and accountable, to launch sweeping ethics reform, and to begin a new era of transparent and open government.

Across the country, families are tightening their belts in this economic crisis, and so should Washington. That is why in the *Presidential Memorandum Regarding Pay Freeze* the President has announced that he will freeze his White House senior staff pay at current levels to the full extent allowed by law. This will enable the White House to stretch its budget to get more done for the country. The President and his staff recognize that in these austere times, everyone must do more with less, and the White House is no exception.

The American people also deserve more than simply an assurance that those coming to Washington will serve their interests. They deserve to know that there are rules on the books to keep it that way. In the *Executive Order on Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel*, the President, first, prohibits executive branch employees from accepting gifts from lobbyists. Second, he closes the revolving door that allows government officials to move to and from private sector jobs in ways that give that sector undue influence over government. Third, he requires that government hiring be based upon qualifications, competence and experience, not political connections. He has ordered every one of his appointees to sign a pledge abiding by these tough new rules as a downpayment on the change he has promised to bring to Washington.

In the *Presidential Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government*, and the *Presidential Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act*, the President instructs all members of his administration to operate under principles of openness, transparency and of engaging citizens with their government. To implement these principles and make them concrete, the Memorandum on Transparency instructs three senior officials to produce an Open Government Directive within 120 days directing specific actions to implement the principles in the Memorandum. And the Memorandum on FOIA instructs the Attorney General to in that same time period issue new guidelines to the government implementing those same principles of openness and transparency in the FOIA context.

Finally, the *Executive Order on Presidential Records* brings those principles to presidential records by giving the American people greater access to these historic documents. This order ends the practice of having others besides the President assert executive privilege for records after an administration ends. Now, only the President will have that power, limiting its potential for abuse. And the order also requires the Attorney General and the White House Counsel to review claims of executive privilege about covered records to make sure those claims are fully warranted by the Constitution.