



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on January 6, 2011

## Press Secretary Gibbs to Leave Obama White House

After two years Robert Gibbs, Press Secretary for President Barack Obama, has announced his intention to step down from his White House post. His resignation is expected to take effect after this month's State of the Union address. According to the Washington Post, Gibbs "will then hit the lucrative speaking circuit and become a paid consultant to the Obama reelection campaign." Indications are strong that the President intends to run again in 2012. The short list of replacement possibilities for Gibbs includes his own deputies Bill Burton and Josh Earnest, in addition to Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell and the Vice-President's press secretary Jay Carney.



Born in Auburn, Alabama in 1971, while growing up Robert Gibbs would often attend local League of Women Voters meetings with his mother, Nancy Gibbs. According to [Wikipedia](#), she involved him in voter re-identification work at the county courthouse. Graduating from North Carolina State *cum laude* with a B.A. in political science in 1993, he became an intern for Alabama 3rd district Congressman Glen Browder. Rising through the ranks of Browders staff, Gibbs was his executive assistant in Washington, D.C., returning to Alabama in 1996 to work on the Congressman's unsuccessful Senate campaign. Gibbs became press secretary in 1997 for Congressman Bob Etheridge, then became spokesman for the campaign of Senator Fritz Hollings in 1998. He worked for the campaigns of two other senators and served as communications director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee during the following years. In recapping his recent career, Wikipedia continued:

Early in the 2004 presidential campaign, Gibbs was the press secretary of Democratic candidate Senator John Kerry. On November 11, 2003, Gibbs resigned "in reaction to the firing of Jim Jordan, abruptly let go by Kerry Sunday night." Gibbs was replaced by Stephanie Cutter, a former spokeswoman for Ted Kennedy. After leaving the Kerry campaign, Gibbs became spokesman for a 527 political group formed to stop the 2004 presidential campaign of Howard Dean which launched attack ads against Dean. Gibbs was criticized in February 2007, during the Obama Presidential campaign, by some left-leaning bloggers.

Gibbs joined Barack Obama's 2004 U.S. Senate campaign as communications director in mid-April 2004 and remained with the senator through the first two years of Obama's term. Gibbs is credited with guiding Obama through those first years and molding his rise on the national scene. According to the New York Times, Gibbs advised Obama on politics, strategy and messaging, and spent more time with Obama than any other advisor.

The appointment of Gibbs by Obama to the post of communications chief was met with mild controversy by some critics in the Democratic National Committee, who cited Gibbs' role in the aggressive campaign tactics used to block the nomination of Howard Dean in the 2004 race.



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Obama, however, referred to Gibbs as his “one-person Southern focus group” and welcomed him as part of his close-knit team that included strategist David Axelrod, campaign director David Plouffe, and research director Devorah Adler. In his communications role, Gibbs became known as “the enforcer” because of his aggressive rapid-response methods for countering disinformation tactics from opponents. Gibbs assumed responsibility for “shaping the campaign message, responding to the 24/7 news cycle, schmoozing with the press and fighting back when he disagree[d] with its reporting.” As the chief intermediary between the Obama campaign and the press, Gibbs sought to counter the Republican National Committee’s opposition research tactics against Obama in early 2007.

Commenting on the job performance of Robert Gibbs, the website [Whorungov.com](#) said that the surprisingly low number of leaks and campaign in-fighting of President Obama’s 2008 victory should be credited to the outgoing Press Secretary:

Described as the bad cop to Obama’s good cop, Gibbs is chummy with the media but can aggressively take on a reporter over what he views as a negative or unfair story.

Keeping the President on-message isn’t Gibbs’ only task as press secretary. After joining Obama’s Senate campaign in 2004 and sticking with him through the four years that followed, Gibbs is also a trusted adviser to Obama, someone who is not afraid to disagree with his boss. In fact, he is so close to Obama that he is informally known as the Barack Whisperer.

Under his tenure, the White House has become more involved with virtual communication social networking, Blackberry/YouTube use, etc. However, Gibbs feels there is no intention to dissolve the Briefing Room and customary interaction with the press there, saying, “I think the briefing will endure.”

Regarding Gibbs’ future, The Washington Post additionally observed:

He’ll also have the opportunity to get paid. “He’s had a six-year stretch now where basically he’s been going 24/7 with relatively modest pay,” Obama said in an interview with The New York Times on Wednesday. Gibbs’s White House salary is \$172,200 a year. Last spring, David Axelrod, who is also preparing to leave the administration to go to work for the reelection campaign, said that Gibbs, who was then considering moving into the Oval Office as a senior adviser, was a “long-term associate,” and “not a hired gun.”

Times have changed. On Wednesday, Gibbs said that while Obama would be the last political candidate he would ever work for, he would not rule out other avenues of income, including representing corporations – “if that’s something that I decided to do and I was comfortable with who those clients were.”

Democratic operative Jim Jordan, who helped bring Robert Gibbs onto Senator Kerry’s 2004 Presidential campaign staff, said that the job of a press secretary “has gotten harder and harder with the splintering of media and the public’s attention span. It’s harder to generate coherent media messages. It’s harder to reach critical mass.”

Still, he said, “Robert’s political tombstone will read [that] he served President Obama well.”

And therein lies the rub. A committed liberal for all of his professional life at least, Gibbs intends to follow both that cause and the continued promotion and defense of Barack Obama. Often considered by turns patronizing, arrogant and exasperated in his press secretary duties and at [times](#) seriously uninformed Gibbs blew up last August when those he called the professional left expressed impatience



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with the slowness of Obama's radicalization of America. The press secretary complained, I hear these people saying hes like George Bush. Those people ought to be drug tested. I mean, its crazy.

Perhaps it indeed is the lack of expected radical results which has caused major changes in White House personnel recently. It may also be that departing Obama staffers are weary of the intense pressure of the battle, especially in these days of the Constitutional and patriotic uprising of so many of the now-alarmed American people. Whatever the cause, it is hoped a worthy candidate will be inhabiting the White House come 2012. With such a victory, it also is hoped that those like Robert Gibbs will be relegated to powerlessness - their influence to insignificance, irrelevancy and a lesson learned for the future.



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