



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 5, 2010

Rahm Emanuel Announces Candidacy But Is He Eligible?

President Barack Obama's Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, resigned from his post on October 1 amid rampant speculation that he would run for Mayor of Chicago in the wake of incumbent Mayor Richard M. Daley's announcement that he will not stand for reelection next year.



Upon his resignation Emanuel got an unusual but strangely appropriate sendoff, ABC News Jake Tapper [reports](#). Council of Economic Advisers chair Austan Goolsbee presented Emanuel with a dead fish wrapped in newspaper, which Tapper explains was an allusion to the Emanuel legend of his sending a dead fish to a pollster for whom he didn't care, replicating the scene from *The Godfather* when the Corleones were alerted of Luca Brasi's death with a dead fish wrapped in Brasi's bullet-proof vest. Specifically, the fish was an Asian carp, bane of the Great Lakes, a plankton-devouring creature heading towards Chicago, Tapper writes, noting that Emanuel had spent much time during his three terms in Congress and in the Obama administration trying to get the federal government to do something about the creatures. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs quipped, In Chicago, this is how friends say goodbye.

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Two days after leaving the White House, Emanuel made his candidacy for Mayor official. In a video posted on his campaign website, [ChicagoForRahm.com](#), he announced his candidacy and his upcoming listening tour of the city. Called the Tell It Like It Is tour, it will involve visits to neighborhood gathering places such as grocery stores, L [train] stops, bowling alleys, and hot dog stands. Emanuel asked Chicagoans to tell him in blunt, Chicago terms how they want to improve the city.

Undoubtedly mindful that he is inextricably linked with Obama in voters' minds, Emanuel tried to portray himself as fairly conservative, saying:

And to be the city we want to be, we can no longer accept business-as-usual. In attacking our budget deficit, there must be no sacred cows. We should be guided only by the need to protect our neighbors and ensure taxpayer dollars aren't wasted.



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We need leadership that's tough enough to say no when it needs to be said, and smart enough to know what government should do and also what it cant do.

One of the first things Emanuel said in his video was I was born here and my wife Amy and I raised our three children here. Im glad to be home. There's just one minor problem: The video, *Politicos* Ben Smith [reports](#), was shot in the Washington, D.C., offices of AKPD Message and Media, whose founder is Obamas senior adviser, David Axelrod.

Smith adds: The fact that Emanuels use of the word here wasnt accurate is an amusing footnote to what Illinois lawyers say may be a serious legal problem: Rivals are challenging Emanuels residency, and his right to run will hinge on where his home actually is. Abdon M. Pallasch of the *Chicago Sun-Times* [writes](#) that two of Chicagos top election lawyers say the states municipal code is crystal clear that a candidate for mayor must reside in the town for a year before the election. Another three election lawyers say Emanuel could be thrown off the ballot on a residency challenge. None says Emanuel will have it easy.

The problem for Emanuel is that he moved his family to Washington when he accepted the job as Obama's chief of staff and then rented out his Chicago house to a family that now refuses to break the lease and clear the way for Emanuel to move back in, according to Pallasch. Emanuel could come back to Chicago to vote, but he could not stop at the house he owns on his way to the polling place, and that does not meet the residency test to run for mayor, [attorney Jim] Nally said. (Nally pointed out the irony that Emanuels former boss, President Obama, could come back to Chicago and run for Mayor if he wanted because he never rented out his home and has come back to stay there on rare occasions, says Pallasch.)

Pallasch, however, notes that Emanuel could argue that he has maintained ownership of the home, voted absentee earlier this year, pays property taxes on his house, lists the address on his drivers license, registers his car there, and always intended to return. Cook County judges give great deference to a candidates intent. Pallasch further explains that Chicago Board of Elections officials have said that they start with the presumption of intent if a candidate maintains a home in Chicago and votes absentee there, which probably means Emanuels challengers are facing an uphill battle to get him removed from the ballot on the basis of residency. Still, the fight will make good political theater, if nothing else. Keep your popcorn handy.

Photo of Rahm Emanuel: AP Images



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