

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks on the Resignation of White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel and the Appointment of Peter M. Rouse as Interim White House Chief of Staff
October 1, 2010

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the least suspenseful announcement of all time. *[Laughter]* As almost all of you have reported—*[laughter]*—my Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, has informed me that he will be leaving his post today to explore other opportunities. *[Laughter]*

This is a bittersweet day here at the White House. On the one hand, we are all very excited for Rahm as he takes on a new challenge for which he is extraordinarily well qualified. But we're also losing an incomparable leader of our staff and one who we are going to miss very much.

When I first started assembling this administration, I knew we were about to face some of the most difficult years this country has seen in generations. The challenges were big and the margin for error was small: two wars, an economy on the brinks of collapse, and a set of tough choices about issues that we had put off for decades—choices about health care and energy and education, how to rebuild a middle class that had been struggling for far too long.

And I knew that I needed somebody at my side who I could count on, day and night, to help get the job done. In my mind, there was no candidate for the job of Chief of Staff who would meet the bill as well as Rahm Emanuel. And that's why I told him that he had no choice in the matter. He was not allowed to say no. It wasn't just Rahm's broad array of experiences in Congress and in the White House, in politics and in business. It was also the fact that he just brings an unmatched level of energy and enthusiasm and commitment to every single thing that he does.

This was a great sacrifice for Rahm, Amy and the family to move out here. Rahm gave up one of the most powerful positions on Capitol Hill to do this. And in the last 20 months, Rahm has exceeded all of my expectations. It's fair to say that we could not have accomplished what we've accomplished without Rahm's leadership, from preventing a second depression to passing historic health care and financial reform legislation to restoring America's leadership in the world.

So for nearly 2 years, I've begun my workday with Rahm. I've ended my workday with Rahm. Much to Amy's chagrin, I've intruded on his life at almost any hour of the day, any day of the week, with just enormous challenges. His advice has always been candid; his opinions have always been insightful; his commitment to his job has always been heartfelt, born of a passionate desire to move this country forward and lift up the lives of the middle class and people who are struggling to get there.

He has been a great friend of mine and will continue to be a great friend of mine. He has been a selfless public servant. He has been an outstanding Chief of Staff. I will miss him dearly, as will members of my staff and Cabinet with whom he's worked so closely and so well.

Now, I don't think anybody would disagree that Rahm is one of a kind. I am very fortunate to be able to hand the baton to my wise, skillful, and longtime counselor, Pete Rouse. Pete, who has more than 30 years of experience in public service, will serve as Interim Chief of Staff as we enter the next phase of our administration.

Many of you remember Pete as the top aide to then Senator—Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. Pete was affectionately known as the 101st senator. From the moment I became a U.S. Senator, he's been one of my closest and most essential advisers. He was my chief of staff in the Senate. He helped orchestrate and advise my Presidential campaign. He has served as one of my senior advisers here at the White House.

And in that role, he's taken on a series of management and legislative challenges with his customary clarity and common purpose. There is a saying around the White House: Let's let Pete fix it. *[Laughter]* And he does. Pete's known as a skillful problemsolver, and the good news for him is that we have plenty of problems to solve. *[Laughter]*

So I am extraordinarily grateful to him that he's agreed to serve as our Interim Chief of Staff. And I look forward very much to working with him in this new role.

Obviously, these two gentlemen have slightly different styles. *[Laughter]* I mentioned, for example—this was a couple of years ago—I pointed out that Rahm when he was a kid had lost part of his finger in an accident, and it was his middle finger, so it rendered him mute for a while. *[Laughter]* Pete has never seen a microphone or a TV camera that he likes. *[Laughter]*

And yet there's something in common here. You know, as President of the United States you get both the credit and the blame for what happens around here. And the blame is usually deserved, or at least I happily accept it because that comes with the territory. But the credit really goes to the men and women who work in this building.

It goes to people like Rahm and Pete and the hundreds of others who are here today, who sometimes get some attention and sometimes don't, but these are folks who give up incredibly lucrative opportunities, sacrifice enormously, and their families sacrifice enormously. They come here every day to do the best possible job on behalf of the American people, and oftentimes, they don't get the thanks that they deserve.

As your President and as a fellow American, I want to take this moment to say to all the staff, all the Cabinet members, how proud I am of you and how grateful I am of you, and how particularly proud and grateful I am to my outgoing Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:22 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of White House Chief of Staff Emanuel.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : White House Office: Interim Chief of Staff, appointment, remarks; Resignations and Retirements : White House Office: Chief of Staff, resignation, remarks.

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