



Who will stay and who will go in Obama's second term?

By Jolie Lee - 11/6/2012

(This story has been updated from its original version to reflect the outcome of the presidential election and to include comments from Don Kettl of the University of Maryland.)

Although President Barack Obama is gearing up for four more years as Commander-in-Chief, the face of the Cabinet will see big changes, experts tell Federal News Radio.

So far, the President's first-term Cabinet has had turnovers only in Defense and Commerce.

"The Obama people are very stable, which means that they're also very tired. They've been there now for four years. You would expect the inner Cabinet to go — State, Treasury, Defense and Justice," said Stephen Hess, senior fellow emeritus at the Brookings Institution, who served in the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations.

Already, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner have said they don't plan to stay on for a second term.

None of the other Cabinet members have stated publicly whether they plan to stay or go. But it's likely that about half of Obama's Cabinet will change over at the start of a second term, said Martha Joynt Kumar, political science professor at Towson University.

Filling those positions won't be too much of a challenge because plenty of "smart people" are waiting for a chance to serve in those roles, said Don Kettl, dean of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, in an interview with ***The Federal Drive with Tom Temin and Emily Kopp***.

"Just who is a good question, and how many more musical chairs among Cabinet positions, I think, is a very interesting thing we'll be watching," Kettl said. "There's going to be a little bit of a breather [after the election], but I suspect in the next week or two, we're going to see a lot of shakeout."

Speculation over Cabinet successors

Office of Management and Budget

Current Acting OMB Director Jeffrey Zients is among the likely officials to head the budget agency. Others are Doug Elmendorf, the director of the Congressional Budget Office; Gene Sperling, director of the National Economic Council; and Rob Nabors, head of legislative affairs at the White House, according to Government Executive.

Defense

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has not publicly stated if he will stay on for a second Obama term. If Panetta does decide to step down, one contender for the job is Michele Flournoy, who is advising the Obama administration on its defense strategy. Flournoy is a former undersecretary of Defense for Policy, the highest Pentagon post achieved by a woman. A second-term Obama Defense Department would focus on cybersecurity, intelligence capabilities and Special Operations forces, Flournoy said in an interview with Federal News Radio.

Other possible Panetta replacements are Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, former Democratic Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, former Republican Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel and former secretary of State Colin Powell, CNN reports. Although he served under George W. Bush, Powell endorsed Obama for president.

Intelligence

Like Panetta, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper has not said if he will stay or go if Obama is re-elected. However, CNN reports a possible replacement is Marine Corps General James Cartwright, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

State

Clinton said she will stay as Secretary of State until her successor is confirmed. Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is a top choice for the position. United Nations Ambassador Susan Rice and National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon are also on the short list.

Treasury

With Geithner planning to make an exit in 2013, Erskine Bowles, chief of staff under President Bill Clinton, and retiring Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.), are possible successors, Mark Calabria of the Cato Institute told Bloomberg News. Bowles

helped craft the President's deficit reduction plan, and Conrad is the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Another top contender is Jacob Lew, Obama's chief of staff and former director of the Office of Management and Budget. Lew could potentially play a huge role in a second Obama term if he "can close a lame-duck compact that somehow chops the deficit, avoids the hated sequester, and largely leaves Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security intact," The Atlantic reports.

Justice

If Attorney General Eric Holder steps down, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano is often cited as a successor. Other possibilities are Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara and Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick. Current legislators could also be contenders, including Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), reports National Journal.

Homeland Security

If Napolitano does land in the AG position, that leaves the Obama administration the task of nominating a DHS secretary. National Journal points to New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelley, law enforcement expert Bill Bratton and retired Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen as possible successors.