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 **OPENTHEBOOKS OVERSIGHT REPORT**

WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL

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WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL

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Dedicated to Dr. Tom Coburn

OpenTheBooks Honorary Chairman
Rest In Peace - March 28, 2020

By Adam Andrzejewski
Founder/CEO

Thomas W. Smith
Chairman

"OpenTheBooks is doing the work I envisioned when the Coburn-Obama bill became law. Their innovative app and other tools are putting sunlight through a magnifying glass."

U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, MD
Washington, D.C. | March 11, 2014

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"I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results, but also to earn back the trust in government..."

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama

PROLOGUE

White House staff set the tempo for a presidential administration and for the nation.

A lot can be learned about an administration’s priorities based on how many people are hired, who those people are, and what those people do.

Since 1995, presidents have been required to submit a yearly report of White House staff titles and salaries to Congress, which approves the annual White House budget.

That report includes only political roles such as advisors and press secretaries, and number in the hundreds. The actual **number** of people running White House operations, from chefs to secret service to Air Force One crew, number in the thousands.

OpenTheBooks.com has been tracking White House staff spending through these annual reports and other auditing investigations for the past three administrations: Biden, Trump, and Obama.

Our findings have highlighted dramatic shifts between the size and scope of Democratic and Republican presidential administrations, from new issue-area “czars” to the First Lady’s staff.

This *OpenTheBooks Oversight Report: White House Payroll* collects and analyzes critical information on White House staff expenses over the years.

When running for vice president in 2008, Joe Biden said, “Don’t tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value.”

While the White House personnel budget is an infinitesimal part of the \$4+ trillion federal budget, it can be an important tool in forecasting presidential spending. Our investigation gets to the heart of the most recent administrations’ values, by starting at the top.

WHO WE ARE

American Transparency (OpenTheBooks.com) is a public charity. We do not accept government money. Our oversight reports present hard data so citizens, media, think tanks, politicians, and watchdogs can “follow the money.” Hard facts are non-partisan and enhance the public discourse.



TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS

- 1** **President Joe Biden's Office of the White House** spending in his first year tops both of his most recent predecessors: \$49.6 million compared to Donald Trump's \$39.5 million and Barack Obama's \$49.4 million (both figures inflation adjusted).
- 2** **Biden's spending is in line with his higher staff levels:** 560 staffers in his first year compared to Trump's 377 and Obama's 487.
- 3** **Jill Biden had 12 staffers her first year as First Lady,** more than twice as much as Melania Trump's five, but half as much as Michelle Obama's reported 24.
- 4** **Several Obama-era staffers** are back to serve under Biden, including presidential assistants Susan Rice and Jeff Zients.
- 5** **Each of the past three presidents** started their terms with 22 presidential assistants, the highest ranking White House staffers.

- 6 **Salaries for presidential assistants rose** from \$172,000 to \$180,000 from Obama’s first term to Biden’s, an increase of 4.6 percent over 13 years.
- 7 **The highest paid staffer** between all three administrations was John Czwartacki, Trump’s 2019 senior advisor to the chief of staff making \$239,595.
- 8 **Trump was the first president to donate** his entire \$400,000 salary since John F. Kennedy.
- 9 **Obama donated part of his salary in 2013**, giving up \$20,000 in solidarity with government pay freezes that year.
- 10 **Trump’s highest White House payroll** was \$41,284,244 in 2019, Obama’s highest was \$40,225,595 in 2015 (not adjusted for inflation).



\$41,284,244
WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL

2019



\$40,225,595
WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL

2015



SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The White House releases an annual report on staff salaries on or around July 1 every year. Data for this report was collected from those documents. White House salary data from 2009-2021 can also be found on OpenTheBooks.com's [database](#). Other information regarding administration personnel was collected via online resources, citations are provided as hyperlinks in text.

The president's \$400,000 salary and vice president's \$235,100 salary are not included in White House spending totals.

Where indicated, payment figures are adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars. Adjustments were determined using the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' [inflation calculator](#). For total administration-wide inflation-adjusted calculations, individual years were inflation-adjusted and then added together.

Because inflation-adjusted numbers were updated for this report, they may differ from previously reported numbers. All White House spending totals for the Obama and Trump administrations are included in tables in their respective sections for independent verification.



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PAYROLL SPENDING BY THE NAMES AND NUMBERS

Dollar amounts in () are adjusted for inflation to 2021.

TOTAL STAFF AND SPENDING



BIDEN (2021- PRESENT)

First year spending: \$49.6 million

Number of staff: 560

Projected term-long spending: \$200 million



TRUMP (2017-2020)

First year spending: \$35.8 million (\$39.5 million)

Number of staff in first year: 377

Total term-long spending: \$152 million (\$163 million)



OBAMA (SECOND TERM 2013-2016)

First year spending: \$37.8 million (\$43 million)

Number of staff first year: 460

Total term-long spending: \$155.6 million (\$178.2 million)

OBAMA (FIRST TERM 2009-2012)

First year spending: \$39 million (\$49.4 million)

Number of staff in first year: 487

Total term-long spending: \$153 million (\$187 million)

HIGHEST PAID STAFFERS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE

Dollar amounts are not inflation adjusted.



BIDEN 2021

- **Molly Groom (\$185,656)**
Policy Advisor For Immigration, transferred from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- **Elizabeth Hone (\$183,164)**
Senior Policy Advisor For Broadband, transferred from the Federal Communications Commission



TRUMP 2017

- **Mark House (\$187,500)**
Senior Policy Advisor



OBAMA 2013

- **Seth Wheeler (\$225,000)**
Senior Policy Advisor, transferred from the Federal Reserve

OBAMA 2009

- **David Marcozzi (\$193,000)**
Director of Public Health Policy, transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services

KEY PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANTS

The title “Assistant to the President” is the highest ranking, often highest paid staff position in the Office of the White House. Assistants have tremendous political influence and are sometimes well-known figures from press coverage. Each of the past three presidential administrations have had 22 assistants to the president their first year. Some of them include:



BIDEN 2021-PRESENT

Presidential Assistant Salary: \$180,000

- Ron Klain (Chief of Staff)
- Susan Rice (Domestic Policy Council)
- Jennifer Psaki (Press Secretary)
- Gina McCarthy (National Climate Advisor)



TRUMP 2017

Presidential Assistant Salary: \$179,700

- Steve Bannon (Chief Strategist)
- Kellyanne Conway (Senior Counselor)
- Omarosa Manigault (Director of Communications, Office of Public Liaison)
- Reince Priebus (Chief of Staff)



OBAMA 2013

Presidential Assistant Salary: \$172,200

- Antony Blinken (Deputy National Security Advisor)
- Valerie Jarrett (Senior Advisor for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement)
- James Carney (Press Secretary)
- Christian Tchen (Chief of Staff to the First Lady)

OBAMA 2009

Presidential Assistant Salary: \$172,200

- David Axelrod (Senior Advisor)
- Rahm Emanuel (Chief of Staff)
- Alyssa Mastromonaco (Director of Scheduling)
- John Brennan (Deputy National Security Advisor)

Dollar amounts are not inflation adjusted.



THE BIDEN WHITE HOUSE

BIDEN YEAR ONE

FIRST YEAR OF BIDEN WHITE HOUSE SEES PAYROLL REACH NEW HEIGHTS

CASE STUDY

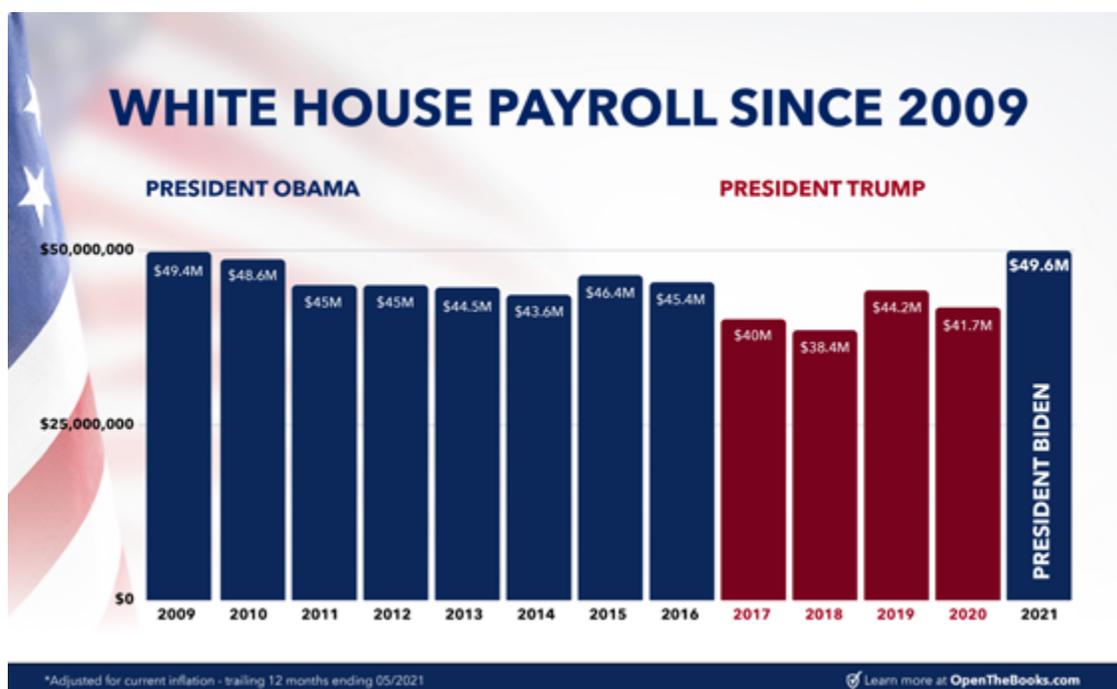
Joe Biden took office in January 2020, and wasted no time building a massive White House staff.

The administration’s first [Report to Congress](#) on White House Office Personnel, issued July 2021, listed 560 White House employees with a combined salary of \$49.6 million.

The new report outlined a nearly \$10 million increase in payroll spending over the Trump 2017 payroll. Adjusting for inflation, in Trump’s first year the White House spent \$39.5 million for 377 employees.

Biden’s White House salary costs will likely continue to outpace his predecessors. The [projected](#) four-year costs of the Biden payroll top \$200 million, compared to the 2017-2020 Trump administration’s \$152 million (inflation adjusted to \$163 million), the 2013-2016 Obama administration’s \$155.6 million (\$178.2 million), and the 2009-2012 Obama administration’s \$153 million (inflation adjusted to \$187 million).

A higher number of staff beef up the budget: 183 more people are employed in Biden’s White House than [under](#) Trump (377) and 73 more than under Obama (487) at the same point in respective presidencies.



COUNTING CZARS

Starting in 2009, President Obama came under fire for hiring special initiative “czars,” which serve as policy experts and can influence activities in relevant executive agencies. Unlike the appointed heads of agencies, they do not need to undergo Senate confirmation. Czars can serve in federal agencies or in the Office of the White House.

That year, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) summed up the problem with czars at a Senate [hearing](#): “many ‘czars’ appointed by this administration seem either to duplicate or dilute the statutory responsibilities that Congress already has conferred upon Cabinet-level officers and other senior executive branch officials.”

Examples of these Obama-era White House czars include Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol Browner (\$172,000), Director of the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Joshua DuBois (\$98,000), White House Director of Urban Affairs Adolfo Carrion Jr. (\$158,500), and Director of the White House Office of Health Reform Nancy-Ann DeParle (\$158,500).

From 2017-2020, we found no evidence of “czars” on Trump’s White House payroll, although some, such as trade czar Robert Lighthizer (2020 salary \$203,500), served in federal agencies.

Biden has named at least 21 czars to date, with [plans](#) to fill 55 positions.

An op-ed in Politico already [questioned](#), “How many czars does the Biden administration need?”

Biden’s first-year czars include National Climate Advisor Regina McCarthy (\$180,000). Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry is an international climate negotiations czar, but is appointed under the State Department, rather than under the Office of the White House (\$183,100).

Obama-era czar Jeff Zients (\$36,000) made a return as Biden’s COVID-19 czar on the White House payroll. From 2009-2013, Zients served as chief performance officer working on fixing bugs in the Healthcare.gov website, and later on economic policy as director of the National Economic Council.

FIRST LADIES STAFF UP



The Office of the First Lady was formed under Rosalynn Carter in 1977, and is headquartered in the East Wing of the White House. The first ladies are an important part of political and social life, hosting White House events, conducting meetings at home and abroad, and crafting their own policy priorities.

First ladies do not collect a federal salary, but through this office they have access to a staff able to assist in daily activities and policy priorities. FLOTUS staff are included in the annual White House salary reports.

Getting a full count of FLOTUS staff is not straightforward, as some staff that work for the first lady do not have that designation in their titles. For this section we have relied on the White House verification of staff numbers in media reports to determine total staff numbers, along with annual White House payroll reports.



JILL BIDEN

2021 STAFF NUMBER: 12
2021 STAFF COSTS: \$1.35 MILLION

Although her FLOTUS role is unpaid, Jill Biden still collects a salary as a professor at the Northern Virginia Community College, as the only first lady to have a job outside the White House. In the year 2021 she **earned** \$67,116 from teaching.

Like her husband, Jill Biden also started her first year in the White House with a larger staff than her predecessor. The 2021 White House payroll report listed 12 staff for Jill Biden, compared to Melania Trump's five.

Jill Biden's staff include press, communication, and advance trip directors, media coordinators and schedulers. There are senior advisors, and a couple of social secretaries. Five of the employees also serve the president in some capacity.

The Biden White House's FLOTUS staff cost taxpayers \$1.35 million and include:

- Julissa Reynoso Pantaleon, Chief of Staff to the First Lady and White House Gender Policy co-chair (\$180,000)
- Elizabeth Alexander, Director of Communications for the First Lady (\$155,000)
- Social Secretary Carlos Elizondo (\$155,000)
- Deputy Social Secretary Liz Hart (\$80,000)
- Press Secretary Michael LaRosa (\$100,000)

The final staff count for 2022 will not be available until the next White House Office Personnel report, which will likely be released over the summer. But reports indicate Jill Biden has welcomed new East Wing staff in 2022, **adding** a staffer to her communications team to prepare for midterm elections.



MELANIA TRUMP

2017 STAFF NUMBER: 5
2017 STAFF COSTS: \$601,700
(\$665,282 ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)

Melania Trump had an unusually **small** staff throughout her term as first lady, with only five dedicated FLOTUS personnel.

The staffers and their salaries were:

- Lindsay Reynolds, Chief of Staff to the First Lady (\$179,700)
- Stephanie Grisham, Director of Communications for the First Lady (\$115,000)
- Anna Niceta, Social Secretary (\$115,000)
- Timothy Tripepi, Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations for the First Lady (\$115,000)
- Mary-Kathryn Fisher, Deputy Director of Advance for the First Lady (\$77,000)

By 2018, the FLOTUS had a staff of 10 as she **launched** her three-pronged “Be Best” initiative to combat childhood bullying, social media use, and opioid abuse. In 2019 the number **inched** up to 12.

By **2020**, Melania Trump’s staff ticked down again to 11. The famously private first lady had good reason to keep her circle small in a White House plagued with accusations of leaking sensitive information.

Even so, longtime staffer Stephanie Grisham, who served in multiple positions over the four-year term, publicly turned on the Trump administration and the first lady in 2021.

Grisham wrote a tell-all book published that year about her time in the administration and conducted interviews trashing the Trumps.

She collected \$636,000 in salary over her four-year tenure, with an ending salary of \$183,000 as assistant to the president and chief of staff to the first lady and spokesperson.



MICHELLE OBAMA

2009 STAFF NUMBER: 16
2009 STAFF COSTS: \$1.2 MILLION
(\$1.26 MILLION ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)

Michelle Obama had a comparatively large staff from the beginning of her husband's administration: the 2009 Obama White House staff report lists 16 staffers with titles under the Office of the First Lady. However, the White House **confirmed** in separate press reports that Michelle Obama's staff included 24 employees collectively paid \$1.6 million in 2009.

The high number included assistants, advisors, schedulers, directors, deputies, advance aides, associates, social and press secretaries and other helpers.

Staff helped the first lady implement her own ambitious policy agenda focused on childhood wellness, called Let's Move!, which was officially rolled out in February 2010. The campaign had several strategic **goals**, from revising nutritional guidance for school lunches to compelling retailers to offer more health food.

The Let's Move! initiative prompted **billions** of dollars in federal spending on an array of new federal programs, and came with its own unusual payroll changes for the East Wing.

The Obama's personal chef Sam Kass was promoted from assistant chef to senior policy advisor for health food initiatives in 2010 and became executive director of Let's Move! in 2013 with a \$125,000 salary. Other notable Let's Move alumni include Kirby Bumpus, journalist Gayle King's daughter, who served as associate director of policy for the program in 2014, making \$80,662.

In 2016, Let's Move! had three assigned staff. Salaries of White House staff assigned to the program totaled \$1,034,432 between 2012-2016.



THE TRUMP WHITE HOUSE: THE PRESIDENT'S SALARY AND SALARY DONATIONS

CASE STUDY

The presidential salary is a requirement of the U.S. [Constitution](#) in Article II, Section 1, Clause 7 and the specific amount is set by Congress.

Since 2001, presidents have received a salary of \$400,000 and can access a yearly expense account of \$50,000. Presidents cannot legally decline their salary.

President Donald Trump famously ran on a promise to donate all of his salary, a promise he seemed to keep through quarterly donations to various federal agencies.

The first quarter of his term [he donated \\$78,333](#) to the National Park Service to restoration projects on the Antietam Battlefield, a significant Civil War site.

Because Trump did not take office until January 20, 2017, the \$100,000 he would have earned for the first quarter was [prorated](#) to \$78,333. An anonymous donor contributed \$22,000 more to make the donation top \$100,000.

After that first quarter, Trump donated \$100,000. Each donation cut into his personal funds to make up the difference after paying taxes.

However, Trump did not announce donations of his salary for the last two quarters of his term. It is unclear where - or if - he made those donations.

ALL KNOWN AGENCY DONATIONS AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

		DONATION AMOUNT	AGENCY	DESCRIPTION
2017	Q1	\$78,333	National Park Service	Historic battlefield restoration
	Q2	\$100,000	Department of Education	Space camp for low-income youth
	Q3	\$100,000	Department of Health and Human Services	Opioid addiction awareness campaign
	Q4	\$100,000	Department of Transportation	Infrastructure modernization
2018	Q1	\$100,000	Veteran's Administration	Caregiver support programs
	Q2	\$100,000	Small Business Administration	Veteran entrepreneur training program
	Q3	\$100,000	National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism	In honor of his brother, who died of alcoholism-related causes
	Q4	\$100,000	Department of Homeland Security	Securing the U.S. border and citizens
2019	Q1	\$100,000	Department of Agriculture	Outreach programs to benefit farmers
	Q2	\$100,000	Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Surgeon General	Addictive drugs health advisory
	Q3	\$100,000	Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health	Opioid crisis response
	Q4	\$100,000	Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health	Coronavirus response
2020	Q1	\$100,000	Department of Health and Human Services	Coronavirus response
	Q2	\$100,000	National Park Service	Restoring American monuments

Trump’s net worth **is about \$3 billion**. He is the first president to donate his entire salary since John F. Kennedy.

Biden has an estimated net worth of \$8 million, although he had **earned** around \$17.3 million in the four years between serving as Obama’s vice president and being president himself. Biden is keeping his presidential salary.

Obama had an **estimated** net worth of \$1.3 million when he entered office in 2008, but earned about \$15 million in advances and royalties from 2005 and 2015 from his three books: The Audacity of Hope, Dreams of my Father, and Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to my Daughters.

Obama also collected a salary all eight years he was in office. He returned 5 percent of his salary (\$20,000) to the Department of Treasury in 2013 in a **show** of solidarity with federal workers impacted by spending cuts that year.





2017

TRUMP SETS THE TONE FOR A TRIMMED-DOWN WHITE HOUSE

 **READ AT FORBES**

CASE STUDY

In the first few weeks of his presidency, Trump issued an order mandating an executive agency [hiring freeze](#). Trump asked his agency heads to “seek efficient use of existing personnel and funds to improve public services...”

Trump’s White House payroll likewise displayed the president’s commitment to a small federal government.

At 377, there were 110 fewer employees on White House staff under Trump than under Obama at this point in their respective presidencies.

During Trump’s first year in office, there were about \$5.4 million in inflation-adjusted payroll savings vs. the Obama 2016 payroll.

In 2017, the Trump payroll amounted to \$35.8 million (2021 inflation adjusted to \$39.5 million), while the Obama 2016 payroll amounted to \$39.7 million for 474 employees (2021 inflation adjusted to \$44.9 million).

Notably Trump’s first term marked an absence of special initiative czars on the White House payroll, and the East Wing had a small, five-person FLOTUS staff.

Trump chose to donate his presidential salary, and multiple advisors likewise declined or took reduced salaries, including his daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner, who both served as advisors without pay.

Two key advisors to the president, Gary Cohn and Christopher Liddell, served with reduced salaries of only \$30,000 – the lowest salaries of all staff.

Cohn is the former president of Goldman Sachs and served as the director of the White House National Economic Council. Liddell, a former Microsoft chief financial officer, served as the director of strategic initiatives in the White House.

2018

SMALLER STAFF & SMALLER PAYROLL FOR TRUMP WHITE HOUSE

 **READ AT FORBES**

CASE STUDY

During his second year in office, Trump was able to further shrink head count by three employees, to 374. He also cut the total payroll budget from \$35.8 million (2017) to \$35.2 million (2021 inflation adjusted to \$38 million).

There are 95 fewer employees on the White House staff under Trump than under Obama at this point in their respective presidencies. (In 2010, Obama had 469 employees collectively paid \$38.8 million – adjusting for inflation to 2021, the payroll cost more than \$48 million.)

Of Trump’s 2017 payroll of 377 employees, 148 no longer work at the White House. The employee turnover rate was 39 percent from 2017 to 2018.

The most highly compensated White House employees in 2018 were 23 assistants to the president who earned salaries of \$179,700. The 2018 list includes Sarah Huckabee Sanders (Press Secretary), John Bolton (National Security Advisor), John Kelly (Chief of Staff), Lawrence Kudlow (Economic Advisor), Steve Miller (Policy Advisor), and Kellyanne Conway (Senior Counselor).

2019

TRUMP’S WHITE HOUSE PAYROLL CONTINUES TO SAVE OVER PREDECESSOR

 **READ AT FORBES**

CASE STUDY

Trump added 44 White House employees over 2018, for a total of 418. Total White House payroll also increased from \$35.2 million to \$41.3 million (2021 inflation adjusted to \$43.7 million).

In 2019 Trump had 36 fewer staffers than Obama’s 454 in 2011, the same point in their presidencies. In 2015 Obama’s payroll was much larger: \$40.2 million (\$46 million, adjusted for inflation to 2021) with 474 staffers.

Of Trump’s 2018 payroll of 374 employees, 133 left the White House. The employee turnover rate was 36 percent year-over-year.

The most highly compensated group of White House employees under Trump were 22 assistants to the president who each earned \$183,000.

Additional top earning staff included John “Mick” Mulvaney, acting Chief of Staff (\$203,500), and John Czwartacki, Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff (\$239,595).

2020

TRUMP ENDS TERM SAVING MILLIONS IN PAYROLL SPENDING

✓ READ AT FORBES

CASE STUDY

By his last year in office, the Trump White House had 413 employees, five less than in 2019. The number is 55 fewer than Obama's 468 staffers at the same point in their presidencies.

Trump further honed the White House payroll and saved taxpayers \$2.1 million year over year: \$43.7 million (2019) to \$41.6 million (2020), adjusted for inflation.

As in 2019, there was a 36 percent staff turnover. Of Trump's 2019 payroll of 418 employees, 150 no longer worked at the White House by 2020.

The highest level staff position, assistant to the president, had no salary increase over 2018 and remained at \$183,000. Trump had 20 such assistants in 2020.

The top earning staffer was Peter J. Brown, special representative for disaster recovery, who earned \$190,289.

2020's list of key advisors includes names such as Lawrence Kudlow (Economic Advisor), Steve Miller (Policy Advisor), Kellyanne Conway (Senior Counselor), Hope Hicks (Counselor) and Peter Navarro (Assistant For Trade And Manufacturing).

Adjusted for inflation, Trump spent a total of \$163 million, compared to Obama's first term of \$187 million.



THE FOLLOWING TABLE OUTLINES STAFF AND SPENDING IN TRUMP'S TERM:

	STAFF NUMBER	COST <i>(Cost inflation adjusted to 2021)</i>	HIGHEST PAID STAFFER(S)	NOTABLE ASSISTANTS TO THE PRESIDENT/OTHER TOP STAFF <i>(Salaries: \$179,700-\$183,000)</i>
2017	377	\$35,766,744 (\$39,546,257)	Mark House, Senior Policy Advisor (\$187,100)	Number of staff at highest salary band (\$179,700): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Miller, Senior Policy Advisor • George Sifakis, Director of the Office of Public Liaison • Lindsay Reynolds, Chief of Staff to the First Lady • Andrew Bremberg, Director of the Domestic Policy Council
2018	372	\$35,284,194 (\$38,080,512)	No staffer received a higher salary than the highest salary band	Number of staff at highest salary band (\$179,700): 23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mira Ricardel, Deputy National Security Advisor • Lawrence Kudlow, Economic Policy • Mercedes Schlapp, Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications • Sara Sanders, Press Secretary
2019	416	\$41,284,244 (\$43,754,517)	John Mulvaney, Acting Chief of Staff (\$203,500) John Czwartacki, Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff (\$239,595)	Number of staff at highest salary band (\$183,000): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emma Doyle, Principal Deputy Chief of Staff • John Bolton, National Security Affairs • Dan Scavino, Senior Advisor for Digital Strategy • Peter Navarro, Trade and Manufacturing Policy
2020	403	\$39,741,436 (\$41,614,873)	Peter Brown, Special Representative for Disaster Recover (\$190,289)	Number of staff at highest salary band (\$183,000): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope Hicks, Counselor • Avi Berkowitz, Special Representative for International Negotiations • Stephanie Grisham, Chief of Staff to First Lady and Spokesperson • Mark Meadows, Chief of Staff



THE OBAMA WHITE HOUSE

FIRST TERM

In 2009, Obama had 487 employees with salaries totalling \$39.1 million (inflation adjusted \$49.4 million). While Obama's inaugural White House staff was large compared to Trump's 377 in 2017, those numbers would be dwarfed by Biden's 560 White House employees in 2021.

Obama's 2009 White House staff would be the largest during his entire eight years as president.

His first term also saw his smallest staff: 454 in 2011, with a total cost of \$37.1 million (inflation adjusted \$44.7 million).

Throughout the years, multiple advisors served without pay. In 2009, advisor Pat McGinnis and senior advisor Michael Warren didn't collect salaries.

In the White House, McGinnis consulted on presidential appointee leadership programs; she formerly served as president and CEO of policy nonprofit Council for Excellence in Government. Warren advised political appointments related to economic policy; he previously worked as a McKinsey consultant and ran his own consultancy.

One of Obama's first acts as president was [freezing pay](#) for White House staff in 2009 in response to the Great Recession, which with the help of Congress, was [extended](#) to the entire federal workforce between 2011-2013.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE OUTLINES STAFF AND SPENDING IN OBAMA’S FIRST TERM:

	STAFF NUMBER	COST <i>(Cost inflation adjusted to 2021)</i>	HIGHEST PAID STAFFERS(S)	NOTABLE ASSISTANTS TO THE PRESIDENT/OTHER TOP STAFF <i>(Salaries: \$172,200)</i>
2009	487	\$39,147,222 (\$49,447,201)	David Marcozzi, Public Health Policy Director (\$192,934)	Number of staff at this salary: 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Axelrod (Senior Advisor) • Rahm Emanuel (Chief of Staff) • Lawrence Summers (Director of National Economic Council) • John Brennan (Deputy National Security Advisor)
2010	469	\$38,796,307 (\$48,206,323)	Michael Hash, Deputy Director, Health Care (\$179,700) Timothy Love, Policy Director (\$179,700)	Number of staff at this salary: 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melody Barnes (Director, Domestic Policy Council) • Jonathan Favreau (Director of Speechwriting) • Valerie Jarrett (Senior Advisor) • Patrick Gaspard (Director of Political Affairs)
2011	454	\$41,284,244 (\$43,754,517)	John Mulvaney, Acting Chief of Staff (\$203,500) John Czwartacki, Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff (\$239,595)	Number of staff at highest salary band (\$183,000): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emma Doyle, Principal Deputy Chief of Staff • John Bolton, National Security Affairs • Dan Scavino, Senior Advisor for Digital Strategy • Peter Navarro, Trade and Manufacturing Policy
2012	468	\$37,834,589 (\$44,656,679)	No staffer received a higher salary than the highest salary band	Number of staff at this salary: 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cecilia Muñoz (Director, Domestic Policy Council) • James Carney (Press Secretary) • Christina Tchen (Chief of Staff to the First Lady) • Jacob Lew (Chief of Staff)



THE OBAMA WHITE HOUSE

SECOND TERM

Obama's second term staff and spending numbers were lower on average than his first term's. In 2013, the White House staff numbered 460 and total salaries cost \$37.8 million. Senior policy advisor Seth Wheeler was the highest paid staffer in 2013, and at \$225,000, received the highest salary of any other staffer over the eight years of Obama's terms. Wheeler focused on economic policy, and his pay was substantially higher than other White House staffers because he transferred his service from the Federal Reserve, which has a higher payscale.

The highest number of staff in the second term came in 2015, with 475 staff collecting \$40 million in combined salaries.

The federal pay freeze ended in 2013, and compensation for the highest level staffers (generally called presidential assistants) rose from \$172,200 to \$176,461 between 2014-2016.

As in previous years, some staffers could make considerably more than the presidential assistants, particularly if they were transferred to the White House from other federal agencies.

Only one top staffer, Valerie Jarrett, remained on White House staff all eight years of Obama's terms. Jarrett became a powerful voice in Washington politics over her tenure, *The New York Times* [describing](#) her as "The Other Power in the West Wing," commanding three dozen of her own staffers.

Starting in 2015, President Obama instituted a new fellowship - a [White House Leadership Development](#) program. The program selected high-level career staff from federal agencies to [work](#) on cross-agency projects.

In the initial class of 16 candidates, at least one was placed at the White House - Elaine Ho - at a salary of \$158,700. Before the fellowship, Ho worked at the IRS. Her White House assignment? Working with the Office of the First Lady to [implement](#) Michelle Obama's "Let Girls Learn" initiative.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE OUTLINES STAFF AND SPENDING IN OBAMA'S SECOND TERM:

	STAFF NUMBER	COST <i>(Cost inflation adjusted to 2021)</i>	HIGHEST PAID STAFFER(S)	NOTABLE ASSISTANTS TO THE PRESIDENT/OTHER TOP STAFF <i>(Salaries: \$172,200 - \$176,461)</i>
2013	460	\$39,147,222 (\$49,447,201)	Seth Wheeler, Senior Policy Advisor (\$225,000)	Number of staff at the highest salary (\$172,200): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Childress (Deputy Chief of Staff for Planning) • Thomas Donilon (National Security Advisor) • Katy Kale (Management and Administration) • Kathryn Ruemmler (Counsel)
2014	456	\$37,776,925 (\$43,251,147)	No staffer received a higher salary than the highest salary band	Number of staff at the highest salary (\$172,200): 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Podesta (Counselor to the President) • Ben Rhodes (Deputy National Security Advisor) • Susan Rice (National Security Advisor) • Jeffrey Zients (Director of the National Economic Council)
2015	474	\$40,225,595 (\$45,996,355)	No staffer received a higher salary than the highest salary band	Number of staff at the highest salary (\$173,922): 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anita Breckenridge (Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations) • Joshua Earnest (Press Secretary) • David Simas (Director, Office of Political Strategy) • Warren Eggleston (Counsel)
2016	472	\$39,753,551 (\$44,888,384)	No staffer received a higher salary than the highest salary band	Number of staff at the highest salary (\$176,461): 16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chase Cushman (Director of Scheduling and Advance) • Cody Keenan (Director of Speechwriting) • Lisa Monaco (Deputy National Security Advisor) • Kristie Canegallo (Deputy Chief of Staff for Implementation)

IMAGE SOURCES

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN:

Official White House Photo By Adam Schultz - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/president-biden/> (direct download link), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=103323939>. Pages 2 - 5 of this report.

FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP:

By Shealah Craighead - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/people/donald-j-trump/> (archive), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63768460>. Pages v, 2, 3, 4, 12 of this report.

FORMER PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA:

Official White House Photo by Pete Souza - P120612PS-0463 (direct link)<https://web.archive.org/web/20160227060205/https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/president-obama> (Official White House page - direct link), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=23956389> Pages v, 2, 3, 4, 19, 21 of this report.

FIRST LADY JILL BIDEN:

By Cheriss May - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/dr-jill-biden/>, CC BY 3.0 us, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=99049215>. Pages 8 - 9 of this report. Using Adobe Photoshop, blue tint was added to image on page 8.

FORMER FIRST LADY MELANIA TRUMP:

By Regine MahauxWeaver, Hilary (3 April 2017). Here's What You Should Know About Melania Trump's Official First Lady Portrait. Vanity Fair. Archived from the original on 7 April 2017. Retrieved on 7 April 2017. [O]n Monday[,] . . . the White House released [Melania Trump's] first official portrait, which was taken by Belgian photographer Regine Mahaux Laurent, Olivier (4 April 2017). The Story Behind Melania Trump's Official Portrait. Time. Archived from the original on 7 April 2017. Retrieved on 7 April 2017. - [whitehouse.gov/administration/first-lady-melania-trump](https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/first-lady-melania-trump) (page) (archived)[whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/flotus.png](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/flotus.png) (direct link) (archived)[whitehouse.gov/copyright](https://www.whitehouse.gov/copyright) (license) (archived), CC BY 3.0 us, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57696382>. Pages 8, 10 of this report. Using Adobe Photoshop, red tint was added to image on page 8.

FORMER FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA:

By Joyce N. Boghosian, White House photographer - http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/hi_res/P021809JB-0046_MrsObamaPortrait.jpg, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6057606>. Pages 8, 11 of this report. Using Adobe Photoshop, blue tint was added to image on page 8.



PREVIOUS OVERSIGHT

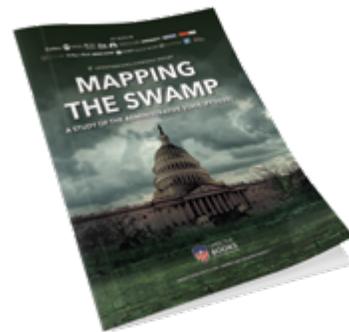
AVAILABLE AT [OPENTHEBOOKS.COM](https://openthebooks.com)



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
The Legal Debate Over The Freedom Of Information Act



DR. ANTHONY FAUCI
Investigating Fauci's Finances



MAPPING THE SWAMP
A Study of the Administrative State (FY2020)



U.S. FOREIGN AID
How and Where The U.S. Spent \$282.6 Billion (FY2013-2018)



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IN 2020...

The President's Budget To Congress FY2021 included a first-ever chapter, "Stopping Wasteful and Unnecessary Spending," which was inspired by our oversight report, *Where's The Pork? A Study of \$600 Billion In Federal Grants*. Included in the President's Budget was our report, *Use-It-Or-Lose-It - How The Federal Government Spent \$97 Billion In September 2018*. The President committed to stopping this wasteful phenomenon. Also, the budget cited our report on the National Endowment of the Arts as the principle reason to eliminate the agency. (Media coverage included USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and FOX News.)

IN 2019...

Our Top 82 U.S. Non-Profit Hospitals: Quantifying Government Payments & Financial Assets report launched on *FOX News' Tucker Carlson Tonight* and *USA TODAY*. This report backstopped President Trump's two executive orders on healthcare price transparency by showing that wealthy charitable non-profit healthcare providers and their CEO's were making big profits. Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) also cited this data in his state of the state address while arguing for price reforms.

IN 2018...

Open The Books' Mapping The Swamp, A Study Of The Administrative State Media report launched on *FOX News' The Ingraham Angle* and directly led to Representative Judy Hice's (R-GA) legislation on pension and bonus transparency (H.R. 2612). Furthermore, we briefed the Executive Office of the President, Office of Management & Budget regarding our policy ideas to drain the swamp.

IN 2017...

The Tax Cuts And Jobs Act 2017, passed into law and included a claw-back tax on Ivy League-style, excessive university endowments. The *Boston Globe* cited our Ivy League, Inc. oversight report as a catalyst for the legislative provision. Coverage included *The Wall Street Journal* and eight segments on *Fox News*.

IN 2016...

We exposed the \$20 million luxury-art procurement program at the Department of Veterans Affairs, which forced a public apology from the V.A. Secretary and the adoption of new rules to stop the abuse. Coverage included *Good Morning America* and *ABC World News Tonight*.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR TEAM

Adam Andrzejewski
Chief Executive Officer
& Founder

Craig Mijares
Chief Operating
Officer

Matthew Tyrmand
Deputy Director
at Large

Courtenay Lyons
Development
Director

Rachel O'Brien
Deputy Public Policy
Editor Director

Christopher Neefus
Communications
Director

Tamara Colbert
Public Relations
Specialist

Amber Todoroff
Writing
Specialist

Milan Erastus-Obilo
Video Editor

Sejelle Erastus-Obilo,
Creative Services Manager,
designed the report.



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