

## LESSONS IN GUBERNATORIAL TRANSITION

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How one Governor relinquishes and his or her successor assumes the powers of office varies markedly from administration to administration. The personalities of powerful politicians, the Governor-elect's margin of victory, and the condition of the state economy all effect the change. But at least part of the difficulty of making smooth gubernatorial transitions-transfers of constitutional and political powers from one administration to the next-is that few guidelines exist to advise the new Governor and his or her transition team on how to proceed. The Governor-elect wakes up Wednesday morning feeling pretty good about things. He or she has just captured the highest state political office, often the crowning achievement of a distinguished and hard-won career. Yet the Governor has little time to savor the victory. The "morning after," he or she must face some daunting tasks and challenges which require immediate attention.

The Governor-elect's "to do" list is long and demanding, involving everything from party planning to crafting a State spending plan. Within a narrow and hectic timeframe marked by high public expectation and close media scrutiny, he or she must: prepare a budget to submit to the Legislature by January 10th; assemble a transition team to advise him or her on key staff and agency appointments; establish strong policy priorities; within the first 100 days of the administration, begin work on carrying out campaign promises; prepare inaugural, State of the State, and budget messages; assemble an inaugural committee to stage and fund the Governor's ball, gala, and swearing in ceremony; and keep the media apprised of transition and inaugural ongoings. And this is to say nothing of moving family and belongings into the Governor's residence. For the Governor-elect and his or her new team, there is tremendous pressure to execute flawlessly these early responsibilities, and yet there is little guidance as how to best address the challenges of transition.

The purpose of this report is to furnish information about past transition experiences to help prepare the new Governor for the immediate challenges of office. From the outset, creating transition guidelines or "best practices" is problematic. Transition is a highly personal process, one influenced by the institutional and political environment at specific points in time. In addition, the Governor is likely to have strong ideas about "what works" for him or her, about how best to organize staff and resources to accomplish specific goals. This said, gubernatorial transition is a unique venture, even for veteran politicians who realize that much here is on the line early: from the day after his or her victory, the Governor-elect must work to win the public trust, to demonstrate his or her desire for effective government, and to swing the momentum of the election into political support for policy objectives. The literature on transitions often states that, in short, a good transition is good government. With this in mind, the authors have prepared this

report to examine past transition practices of California and national Governors with the hopes that it helps promote effective and responsible government.