



Obama's Executive Orders

Obama's staff began as early as August assembling a list of executive orders to be reviewed and possibly reversed. According to a report in the *New York Times*, the assessment is underway, "but a full list of policies to be overturned will not be announced by Mr. Obama until he confers with new members of his cabinet."



It is expected that the new president will take action through executive orders in several areas, notably on issues related to abortion and stem cells, as well as energy and the environment. It is thought that he will likely reverse the so-called "gag" order forbidding taxpayer funding of international abortion counseling and clinics that was reinstated by George W. Bush after the Clintons left the White House. It is also expected that he will act through executive order to restrict drilling and exploration for oil on public lands.

When John Podesta, Obama's transition team co-chair, was pressed by Fox News anchor Chris Wallace to provide details about some of the executive orders on Obama's list, he stated: "I think across the board, on stem-cell research, on a number of areas, you see the Bush administration even today moving aggressively to do things that I think are probably not in the interest of the country. They want to have oil and gas drilling in some of the most sensitive, fragile lands in Utah that they're going to try to do right as they [are] walking out the door. I think that's a mistake."

Particularly after both the Clinton and Bush administrations, the president's use of executive orders has come under fire. President Bush, especially, came under fire for stepping over the constitutional boundary separating the legislative and executive branches. In a possible foreshadowing of whether or not the Obama administration would follow in Bush's footsteps in the use of executive orders, Podesta stated: "There's a lot that the president can do using his executive authority without waiting for Congressional action, and I think we'll see the president do that."

Will Obama exercise more restraint than his recent predecessors in office? In March, according to the *Denver Post*, he promised "to review every executive order." With the promised review underway, perhaps he will also keep his second promise "to overturn those that were unconstitutional."

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