

OH NOES! LOBBYISTS STANDING IN LINE WITH LABOR LEADERS!!

✖ The really amusing part of this story—describing how a number of business interests who ~~ran~~ were warmly welcomed in the Bush White House are aghast that they have to stand in line in the same waiting room with labor interests—is behind a firewall (thanks to egregious for liberating it).

The extent of substantive interaction varies. Some lobbyists, particularly those representing industries Obama wants to promote, report numerous contacts and substantive meetings.

But other K Street veterans report a shocking new reality.

Top business officials accustomed to red-carpet treatment in the Bush White House say they must stand in line in the cold outside transition headquarters along with people they don't recognize, waiting to be cleared to meet with Obama staffers they don't know and who don't always appear to understand their issues. One veteran business official lamented that the only Obama official he has recognized so far is former Environmental Protection Agency Director Carol Browner — along with lobbying foes for labor and environmental organizations he has seen milling around or standing in the queue.

"We were part of the team" during the Bush transition, reminisced another top K Street player. "The business lobby was not pro-Obama," he acknowledged. "And for good reason, if you look at the campaign rhetoric."

Several business representatives wondered whether they were involved in a "check the box" scam designed to show inclusiveness rather than practice it.

"You get your five-minute elevator presentation," said one top industry lobbyist who said his meetings have been devoid of meaty discussion. "They say nothing. It's a pure note-taking exercise. Will they be able to say they reached out? Sure." [my emphasis]

And these poor lobbyists are also worried that the white papers they give the Obama Administration, which under the Jack Abramoff style system employed by the Bush White House would be printed out on White House letterhead and presented as Administration policy, will be released in original form on the net.

Obama appears so far to be sticking to his promise to shed daylight on the process, reversing Bush White House practices most famously exemplified by Vice President Dick Cheney's secret meetings with energy lobbyists. Instead, business types huddling with Obama officials are immediately told that the position papers and other documents they are pushing across the table are going directly onto the Web.

To be fair, the story describes the industries which Obama has welcomed warmly: small businesses, wholesalers and distributors, high tech, and alternative energies. That focus is not entirely a good thing. For example, Obama and Democrats in Congress seem intent on making the auto czar an environmental/finance position, rather than one which brings real value add to auto industry. Though it appears that Steven Rattner has a significant conflict with Cerberus that may make him an impossible auto czar, I still don't see what value he would bring.

That said, I find it immensely satisfying to know that a bunch of indignant lobbyists are being made to stand in line along with lobbyists who represent the rest of us.

(Photo by dabbiputs)