FROM

Becoming an Effective Political Executive:

7 Lessons from Experienced Appointees

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Essays on Working in Washington by:

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Part II

Essays on Working in Washington

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Working with Career Executives to Manage for Results

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Historically, the relationships between political appointees and career executives have been marked with some degree of tension, especially during a transition in leadership. Career executives are perceived by new appointees as continuing the agenda of the previous political leaders, and new political leaders are perceived by careerists as bringing in a new but unclear agenda of changes that may not be anchored in the context of what the agency does.

However, recent management reforms based in both legislation and presidential direction have created a new environment in many agencies that promotes a joint political/career focus on better managing for results related to agency missions.

Based on in-depth observations in three agencies—the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the Department of Labor—this new environment seems to have contributed to con-structive improvements in the relationships between political appointees and career senior executives. The two management reforms that were cited as contributing to this refocused relationship are the Government Performance and Results Act and the President's Management Agenda.

The Government Performance and Results Act.
The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) represents one of the most sweeping managerial reform efforts in the post–World War II period. At its core, it attempts to improve internal agency management by requiring a clear articulation of strategic plans, annual operating plans, and an annual report on performance against the plan for the prior year. GPRA differs from previous reform efforts because it is grounded in statute. As a result, it has success-fully survived a transition between two ideologi-cally diverse presidential administrations.

One of the anticipated byproducts of GPRA-mandated changes is that the law seems to be serving as a positive bridge in communications between career managers and political appointees. Data from the three case study agencies demonstrate that GPRA requirements have had a positive effect on the career/political appointee relationships, which traditionally are strained during a transition between political leaders, either between or within the same administration.

These positive, if unanticipated, effects stem from a number of cultural and institutional changes embedded in GPRA's statutory requirements. For example, the law creates a "common language" between these two executive-branch actors, allowing them to engage each other in ways they had not before. This new pattern of engagement was most apparent during the initial transition in political leadership, a time that is often stressful for careerists and political appointees. During the transition, many politicals and careerists engaged each other in a process of formal goal setting and revision, as required by GPRA. The career interviewees in the three agency case studies

generally characterized this as greatly exceeding the benefits of the traditional transition dialogues that had taken place in the past. The interviews also suggest that the GPRA process has contributed to a number of more substantively meaningful mutual outputs, and may also inhibit the tendency for political and career leadership to inhabit their separate policy spheres without really interacting with one another.

Since GPRA is grounded in law, agencies are legally accountable for its provisions. GPRA implementation and compliance enjoyed sustained support from both the Clinton administration and a few very vocal "GPRA champions" within Congress. These attributes further set GPRA apart from the litany of administratively based reform efforts that frequently ended with the presidential administrations that inaugurated them.

GPRA also departs from many previous administratively centered reforms as it represents an attempt to rationalize the decision making process through requiring the use and continual development of a number of managerial tools, including mission statements, short-term and long-term strategic plans, performance measurement systems, and the dissemination of agency results to Congress, the Executive and agency stakeholders. While it is impractical to think that any reform can unequivocally rationalize the political process, the evidence from the three case studies suggests that this rationalization process has helped to engage these two sets of actors, promoted deliberation and meaningful interactions, and even encouraged creative tensions between the two.

The President's Management Agenda. The results of the case studies also suggest that GPRA's contributions toward improving communications between career and political executives have been sustained by the most recent executive-based reform effort, the George W. Bush administration's President's Management Agenda (PMA). The PMA is a broad-based executive managerial reform effort that is managed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). According to John Kamensky, Senior Fellow at the IBM Center for The Business of Government, the PMA is a strong, disciplined focus on meeting tough but achievable goals. The PMA was designed, in part, to build on the framework established by GPRA.

The PMA seeks to improve agency performance among five government-wide management areas: human capital, competitive sourcing, improved financial management, expanded electronic government, and budget and performance integration. Agency performance is graded on a red/yellow/green scale via OMB's executive branch management scorecard list. The scorecard ranks the performance of 26 executive agencies (14 cabinet departments and 12 independent agencies) along the five management areas. Agencies are given a red, yellow, or green score for each of these criteria on a semi-annual basis; a red score indicates poor performance, yellow indicates mixed results, and green indicates the agency has met or exceeded the standards for success. OMB also developed the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) to support the budget and performance integration component of the President's Management Agenda. PART was created on the assumption that GPRA and the PMA share the common goal of linking performance information to the budgetary process,

but also on the assumption that much of the performance data generated from GPRA is not being used to inform agency or program decisions.

Analysis of the Three Case Studies

While the GPRA and PMA reform efforts differ somewhat in their orientation (one interviewee described GPRA as a long-term capacity-building exercise and the PMA as a mechanism to achieve shorter-term political goals), they reinforce each other in many substantive ways. The PMA has done much to sustain GPRA in the wake of waning congressional interest, and GPRA serves as an underlying framework to achieve PMA goals. This research also suggests that the GPRA process—and subsequent efforts by the PMA—have laid down and reinforced a managerial framework that has demonstrably enhanced political appointee and career manager relationships by promoting cooperation and helping these two actors overcome natural barriers to consensual management.

Both political and career executives have employed GPRA's statutory results-oriented framework and the executive-centered efforts of the PMA to smooth the often stressful process of transition and to enhance the appointee/careerist relationship more generally. Put simply, the focus of GPRA and the PMA on improved government performance depends in vital ways on reduced tensions between the two basic constituencies of the U.S. executive branch. And structural barriers have, it appears, begun to fall, thanks in part to these reforms.

Given the mandate of GPRA and the PMA to enhance government performance, their effect on this fundamental bureaucratic relationship is

vital. Whether these performance management systems can help promote comity and productive relationships is worth exploring in greater depth. Additionally, this research can provide a guide for federal managers to use the management tools established by GPRA and the PMA, especially during future transitions of political leadership when these two executive-branch actors are in the very early stages of forging new working relationships.

Agencies have used GPRA to improve both the leadership transition process and subsequent exchanges between political appointees and career executives. Regarding the former, the strategic planning process has brought these two layers of management together in ways they might not have prior to GPRA.

Additionally, incongruent policy objectives between old and new political leadership can be addressed through a formal update of an agency's long-term strategic plan; high-ranking careerists are often central to such updates. This process has the added benefit of clearly and publicly establishing an agency's new policy objectives early in each new administration; in principle, this may strengthen or accelerate productive relationships among these layers of management. GPRA has helped to create a "common language" for careerists and political appointees, helping careerists to communicate a "performance culture" to their new political leaders.

Evidence also demonstrates that the GPRA process is perceived as being "owned" by the careerists, enabling them to approach new politicals with an established management

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Methodology Used to Develop Study Findings

To what extent can existing reform efforts create a bridge between political and career executives? To answer this question, this inquiry assesses the effects of GPRA and the PMA on the career/political appointee relationships using a variety of approaches. Primary data comes from 43 in-depth interviews, the bulk of which were conducted with career managers and political appointees in three case study agencies:

- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the Department of Labor

Additional interviewees included congressional staffers, personnel from the Office of Management and Budget and the Government Accountability Office, as well as performance management, GPRA, and PMA scholars and practitioners. Other data sources include congressional legislative history, various scholarly assessments of GPRA and the PMA, and specifically GPRA- and PMA-related documents intended for both public and internal consumption.

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framework to help mobilize and carry out their new policy directives. GPRA's statutory framework provides a level of continuity during political leadership transitions that can be adjusted around the margins to reflect the policy goals and directions of the new administration. Additionally, careerists with well-functioning strategic planning and performance reporting systems in place are also in a better position to manage for results; that is, the ability to better direct their agencies' budgetary and human capital resources toward the policy objectives set by their new political leadership.

Conversely, the PMA is a process that is perceived as being owned by political appointees. The PMA has helped to drive and sustain agency interest in GPRA—even as congres-

sional interest in GPRA seems to be waning. More importantly, the PMA's ambitious goal-setting requirements have helped to sustain a transformation of agency culture inaugurated by GPRA.

Findings Derived from Case Studies

The three case studies of agencies' experiences in implementing both GPRA and the PMA, and their joint effects on relationships between career and political executives in a transition of political leadership, yielded a series of findings that can help new political appointees as they take on the challenges of leadership in a new environment.

Finding 1. GPRA has created a common language for politicals and careerists, and this common language offers a number of benefits to the political/careerist relationship.

Many interviewees noted that, in the past, it was easy for political appointees and careerists to operate within their own "parallel universes" without interacting much with one another. One interviewee suggested that GPRA, the PMA, and PART—and the process of goal setting and performance measurement that each requires—can create a convergence of interests by establishing the grounds for a constructive dialogue between politicals and careerists. Another program director likened careerist/political interactions to two college wrestlers who continually circle the mat but never really engage each other. He added that GPRA is the mechanism that allows these two individuals to engage each other on a number of issues.

A number of interviewees suggested that data generated from PMA and GPRA exercises can make it easier for careerists to approach political appointees regarding their policy decisions, if necessary. One interviewee noted that careerists now have information at their disposal to say, "Hey boss, that's a great idea, but…" or even "Hey boss, why don't we find another way to do this because the proposed way *is illegal.…*" One specific example of this type of interaction occurred in HUD during the political leadership transition. Regarding one program, an early revision of the interim strategic plan did not include one of the program's core functions as authorized by Congress. Careerists were able to approach the assistant secretary who oversaw their program about

Finding 1:	GPRA has created a common language for politicals and careerists, and this common language offers a number of benefits to the political/careerist relationship.
Finding 2:	The GPRA process helped smooth the transition in political leadership from the Clinton to the Bush administration.
Finding 3:	Updating GPRA required plans to better reflect the policy goals of the new administration during the transition of political leadership was a beneficial exercise and, in principle, has the potential to strengthen or accelerate productive relationships among careerists and political appointees.
Finding 4:	Setting ambitious goals may also help improve relationships.
Finding 5:	The GPRA process is perceived as being "owned" by careerists; however, it is also seen as a tool that can be used to help political leadership advance the goals and policy agenda of the current administration.
Finding 6:	Generally, the political staff tends to be more focused on the President's Management Agenda, and career staff and managers tend to be more GPRA oriented.
Finding 7:	Congressional interest in GPRA may be waning.
Finding 8:	Interviewees in all three agencies reported a positive shift in department culture and internal management practices and generally attributed these shifts to GPRA.
Finding 9:	Under some conditions, the GPRA and PMA process may help to exacerbate tensions between political appointees and career managers.

their concern. One interviewee recounted that he "was able to go to meetings with the secretary and the other assistant secretaries and say, 'Hey, wait a minute, you've left out a large part of the department here.' " The interim strategic plan was then revised to include this core programmatic component, and both political and career interviewees who spoke about this example reported this as a mutually beneficial experience.

Another career interviewee noted that GPRA has caused the discussion between careerists and politicals to be more strategic, has given careerists and political appointees similar tools to manage, and—most importantly—has established "a new managerial discipline" in his agency. Likewise, a political interviewee noted that GPRA-generated performance information helps both politicals and careerists, stating that "anytime you can get solid, measurable results

to show people, it removes the skepticism … anytime you can remove the 'I think' part of the statement, you're going to have a lot more credibility." One interviewee also noted the usefulness of the GPRA framework for the Bush administration's performance and budget integration initiative under the PMA, which links program performance to the budgetary process:

> ... before, we used to present our budget in terms of activity measures. Now we have to present our budget in terms of what results are expected. And that is probably going to be institutionalized. So the political folks, they do use a common language to defend their budgets in terms of GPRA terminology. So that seems to be a positive effect.

Another benefit of this common language is the formalization and institutionalization of clear goals and responsibilities. One interviewee from NASA added:

> I think that GPRA and strategic plans set the framework; they're the road map for everything that we do. The vision is very broad and the mission even is broad. But, if you can't see what we're doing in there somewhere, we ought to be out of that business. So I think that forces—whether you're talking career people or career and political—it's a forcing function that keeps people on the same page. And whether it helps them work better together or more collaboratively … what I think it does is sets kind of a

clear road map, so you do not have the divergence that you might have otherwise. It just makes things clearer. And from that, I think that you've got more clarity in terms of responsibilities and roles and who's doing what.

In contrast, one OSHA interviewee noted a lag between the time program data is collected and the time that it can be used to measure outcomes (up to 18 months in some cases), and suggested that this lag can sometimes limit the usefulness of results data for career/political interactions. Given the short tenure of many political appointees, this lag may prevent some politicals from evaluating programs initiated during their tenure. Finally, another interviewee suggested that sometimes performance data can demonstrate that a program is working too well and that data can be used to cut politically charged programs in spite of their success. He cited the example of the Clinton administration's $15 million gun buyback program, in which HUD distributed monies to local law enforcement agencies to buy back and destroy guns near federally funded housing projects. Data suggests that over 20,000 guns were destroyed in the program's first year. The interviewee suggested that this program was too successful for the new presidential administration, and the program was subsequently halted by the Bush administration.

Finding 2. The GPRA process helped smooth the transition in political leadership from the Clinton to the Bush administration.
Although GPRA requires agencies to submit an update to their long-term strategic plan to OMB every three years, many departments

and agencies updated their strategic plans early to better reflect the values and policy goals of the Bush administration. Interviewees in each agency generally reported that the updates were a very collaborative process between political appointees and careerists. However, there was some evidence to suggest that the amount of collaboration between politicals and careerists also varied by office or program, and at times there may have been less substantive involvement by the career staff in the strategic planning updates.

An interviewee from HUD suggested that the planning process created by GPRA is the most important part of smoothing transitions, as it "connects political will with strategic directions of departments and programs." He added that the process allows careerists and politicals to evaluate policy and program administration all the way to their ultimate goal, and to consider the effects of both "achieving this goal and who is contributing all along the way." Another interviewee suggested that GPRA allows the "communication of a performance culture" to new political appointees.

One program director added that the benefit of GPRA is that it has institutionalized "repeatable transaction cycles" within his agency. He explained that under these cycles, an underlying management structure is present when new political leadership assumes power. "Road maps" for the agency are in place and careerists are able to adjust them as necessary. With these repeatable transaction cycles, agencies also have increased internal controls and are better able to know what they are currently doing, which allows a "match between what we say we do, and what we in fact do." Finally, a

political appointee interviewed suggests that the GPRA process:

> ... definitely helps that transition go smoother, because before you had something in place like GPRA, you'd have a political person coming in and a career person telling him that "this is the way we've always done it." And the political person saying that "well, you've been here too long, because this is the way the outside world is doing it—this is how we're going to do it." And you don't have as much of that when you have something like a framework that you have to follow to a certain extent.

Interestingly, interviewees from NASA generally indicated that GPRA was beneficial during the transition, but were somewhat more mixed as to the extent to which it contributed to smoothing the transition. A few of these interviewees suggested that NASA was less political than other agencies, with only four Senate-confirmed political appointees and seven Schedule C appointees. Moreover, NASA's latest administrator was appointed and confirmed over 11 months into the Bush administration. Regarding the transition, one NASA interviewee suggested that:

> ... having the systems, or the process— the requirements to have certain things in place helped with the transition, but we started anew when Sean O'Keefe came. And I would suspect when he leaves that there will probably be a similar kind of effort. But, it does ensure some continuity because

our work … is not just short-term programs and projects. They are multi-year—space exploration and aeronautics technology and things like that. So while somebody can come in and change some of the direction based on a new strategic plan or a new strategic vision and mission, you don't just start canning things you've made a significant investment in. So I think it's a helpful thing, and I think there is enough flexibility in the system to allow continuity but at the same time give flexibility to allow new leadership to be able to do what they believe needs to be done in the agency using the GPRA process.

Finding 3. Updating GPRA required plans to better reflect the policy goals of the new administration during the transition of political leadership was a beneficial exercise and, in principle, has the potential to strengthen or accelerate productive relationships among careerists and political appointees.

Arguably, long-term strategic planning promotes continuity and stability between changes in political leadership and can help depoliticize agency management. However, during the transition from Clinton to Bush, the new political leadership in many agencies updated their long-term strategic goals and revised many of their performance report measurements to better reflect the policy objectives of the new administration. This was accomplished through the provision of GPRA that requires agencies to update their strategic plans every three years (though in all cases the update occurred before

the third year). Interviews reveal that, in principle, this process of revising and updating GPRA requirements may help accelerate productive working relationships.

First, there is an existing management framework in place, which provides an institutionalized means for careerists and politicals to reach out to each other early during the transition. One political appointee noted that this is true:

> ... to the extent that the political lead is savvy enough to understand how he or she is going to treat everyone on day one. Some people will come in and say, "Now there's a new sheriff in town, and I don't care what you've done before— things are going to be different." And not really appreciating the fact that it takes a long time to reinvent the wheel. Take the wheel that is there and fix it. Some are savvy enough to know that "I've only got 18 months in order for me to be successful; I've got to get key people on board with my vision."

Second, to the extent that revisions are a collaborative effort between political appointees and career managers, this process brings career managers and political appointees together early regarding policy-related matters. Additionally, incongruent policy objectives between the old and new political leadership can be addressed through a formal update of the agency's long-term strategic plan; high-level careerists are often central to such updates. This process has the added benefit of clearly and publicly establishing the policy objectives and expectations of new political leadership.

Agency interviews also revealed that this process might help accelerate the learning curve for political appointees. One political appointee pointed out that any new political leadership must learn to negotiate a number of administrative, legislative, and political constraints that agencies face over the budgetary process. Arguably, the performance information generated by GPRA and the extent to which political appointees tap the expertise of careerists can help them learn to negotiate these constraints. Another career interviewee suggested that this process benefits both politicals and careerists:

> ... the current administration came in and dealt with the previous strategic plan, but then said all right, and came up with an interim strategic plan, and modified all of the indicators in the annual performance plan. So I think it helps both. The politicals have a better idea of what the programs are doing to see these concrete indicators and then that helps them focus with a clear vision of what they want ... the direction that they want to go. I think it helps everyone say, "Oh, this is what we are aiming to do."

More generally, one interviewee in HUD noted that GPRA gives careerists and politicals a number of "mutually interrelated objectives" to address. At the very least, he suggested that these statutory objectives can help encourage reasonable working relationships between politicals and careerists. He added that for the new political leaders, there is a "law about HUD, a law about what is expected about HUD and all federal agencies," which allows careerists and politicals to look for opportuni-

ties. They can tweak strategic goals, find common ground, and help the president achieve his policies, "all under the context of HUD." Finally, he added that a "big plus" of GPRA is the "state of rapport, cooperation, and understanding" that was not present prior to GPRA.

Thus, any process that helps streamline or reduce the adjustment period could help solidify these relationships earlier and subsequently reduce tensions in the long run. With this said, it is possible that GPRA requirements could also help reduce barriers between careerists and politicals by bringing these two layers of management together in the pursuit of superordinate departmental goals.

Finding 4. Setting ambitious goals may also help improve relationships.
Interview data also suggest that the formalized process of goal setting under GPRA—and to some extent the current efforts of the PMA—might help build a foundation to foster productive working relationships between political appointees and careerists, especially where setting ambitious goals is concerned. One interviewee suggested that ambitious goal setting increases dialogue and promotes cooperation between politicals and careerists. Good career program managers can help with this by recognizing crosscutting goals and leveraging agencies with similar goals and stakeholders (and in many cases quasi-government entities) toward the fulfillment of that goal. This interviewee also noted that when confronted with ambitious goals, "necessity is the mother of all invention," and politicals and careerists often find innovative means to achieve these goals.

Through the PMA, the Bush administration and HUD's political leadership set two ambitious but attainable goals: increasing minority homeownership by 5.5 million units and eliminating chronic homelessness in 10 years. Career and political interviewees indicated that these ambitious goals brought workers together, energized them, and got them excited to achieve these goals. One HUD political appointee noted that the PMA scorecard also helps to inject a healthy dose of competition between agency programs and across similar agencies, stating that these programs "want to be the first to get to green." Another interviewee stated that ambitious goal setting:

> ... speaks to better government—a federal government that is making a difference. I think there is a lot said about creating goals that are loftier than what you are accustomed to. It does create an incentive for greater cooperation internally, because goals are set at a level that requires you to stretch yourself higher than your comfort zone in just getting the job done—punching in and punching out. But setting higher goals creates that synergy for greater cooperation internally.

Finally, another appointee added that ambitious or visionary goal setting has the potential to promote comity between politicals and careerists to the extent that they both agree with the overarching goal. He cited HUD's goal to end chronic homelessness within 10 years and stated that HUD's efforts toward this nonpartisan goal have made significant changes in the way homelessness is now addressed across the nation—and especially

by federal, state, and local government agencies. In contrast, this interviewee suggested that ambitious partisan goals may not promote the same degree of comity or relationship-building potential among politicals and careerists.

Finding 5. The GPRA process is perceived as being "owned" by careerists; however, it is also seen as a tool that can be used to help political leadership advance the goals and policy agenda of the current administration.
Several interviewees suggested that GPRA is a process that is owned by the careerists, and another interviewee likened GPRA to a "constitution" for career managers to carry out their agency's mission and offered the following observation:

> GPRA, with its focus on performance, gave the public servant the ability to rise up and say, "OK, I'm a public servant being held to account for performance, and this is what it will take for me to perform." Then if the agency or the Congress wants to say "no," then that's perfectly all right because the process has worked. But at least the public servant has had a chance to stand up and say "this is what it will take to run this program in the best way." Whereas during that period of across-the-board prorated cuts, if you proposed anything other than simply taking your cut and saluting, you were on the verge of losing your job or severely damaging your career. So I say that the law has had—and can have—an even stronger effect on the concept of management.

Some interviewees suggested that, through the managerial tools set forth by GPRA, it is possible for careerists to increase their responsiveness to politicals in fulfillment of the department's core missions. This observation is also supported by a 2004 Government Accountability Office (GAO) finding that suggests "within agencies, GPRA documents can provide a context of missions, goals, and strategies that political appointees can use to articulate agencies' priorities." One career interviewee added that:

> ... we do have a better idea of where the politicals want to go, by going through the process of developing their overall goals, and, of course, we sort of fill in the words. But it does allow us to get a better sense. For example, the previous administration had a very strong focus on economic development. If you look at our strategic plan that was done a year ago—the latest one—there's not a strategic objective for economic development. So clearly in this administration that is not as much of a focus.

However, another interviewee was very careful to note that while the process resides with the careerists, the goals attached to the process ultimately reside with the political staff (but still within the parameters of the department's general mission). To the extent that political appointees and careerists work within the parameters of GPRA, these tools can be a force that can promote cooperative management.

Finding 6. Generally, the political staff tends to be more focused on the President's Management Agenda, and career staff and managers tend to be more GPRA oriented.
The PMA is the primary vehicle of the Bush administration to manage to its policy objectives, so it is reasonable for political appointees to focus on this aspect of agency management. Additionally, many career interviewees suggested that political appointees were less concerned with GPRA minutiae than its overall results and that the PMA and PART were the primary managerial focus by politicals in all three agencies. For instance, NASA has a team leader for each of the five PMA management areas, and team leaders meet weekly with the administrator to report on their team's progress toward their PMA goals.

Interviewees also characterized GPRA and the PMA very differently. One interviewee characterized GPRA as capacity building and the PMA as a tool to realize short-term political goals. Another interviewee attributed GPRA's focus to good government and long-term achievable milestones and attributed the PMA's focus to episodic milestones and tangible, achievable goals. (Yet another interviewee characterized PMA goals as résumé builders for political appointees.) Generally interviewees reported that PMA and GPRA goals generally complemented each other or built off of one another at both the program and agency or department levels. Often PMA goals were incorporated into the overall goal-setting framework established by GPRA in each agency. One interviewee characterized the PMA and PART as follows:

PART is a piece of the PMA. The PMA is performance, results-based management. Everything they try and do is to become more efficient, more effective, and that's really the foundation of the five management areas. With the PMA, there is stuff that you try and do, but that is being handled at a much broader level. So it doesn't affect you as rapidly as it does if you're working for a program.

Interestingly, career interviewees who work closely with GPRA suggest that the potential for career/political tensions exists between the President's Management Agenda, the OMB's Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART, and GPRA. Interviewees reported that career staff and managers are becoming burdened by the voluminous amount of time and paperwork that goes into GPRA, PMA, and PART compliance, and noted the potential for competing goals, measurements, and lines of accountability between the three initiatives. One political appointee described the process surrounding a PART review:

> So eight months ago they said, "Hey, this year's PART analysis they're doing [program name withheld]. Well, as soon as they say that, you're getting a consultant, because you need someone in the office who can focus totally on PART. Because you need to get all of your reporting stuff together, because the way they want to see the information may not be the way that you have the information and what they want. You may do it, but you have to get it

into their format to give it to them to prove that's what you do.

> The PART is much more stressful, because everyone realizes it's tied into your money line. With PART, you're defending your program, and that's the difference. The other PMA stuff is just adjustments to how you are doing things to make it more efficient. PART is where they are actually saying to you: "You know what, you tell me … you show me that your program works. Don't tell me about it, but show me it works, and then we'll give you money." So there is much more pressure.

Many interviewees described PART as a "painful" process. Although the PMA and PART are examples of executive-based management reform efforts, one interviewee stated that he felt that they have both made significant inroads into agency culture that would probably survive the Bush administration.

Finding 7. Congressional interest in GPRA may be waning.

A few interviewees felt that the information that their department generated for its GPRA requirement went relatively unnoticed by Congress. This "waning" may be due in part to a shift in priorities for the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Governmental Reform. Indeed, until his retirement in 2000, Senator Fred Thompson chaired the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, championed GPRA, and was quite vociferous regarding GPRA oversight.

One interviewee felt that congressional interests and agency involvement would continue to wane without such an outspoken proponent. However, a number of interviewees from HUD noted that some congressional committees and subcommittees that oversee HUD and its programs frequently make use of HUD planning and performance information generated by GPRA.

Interviewees offered a range of views regarding the current state of GPRA within these agencies. One interviewee who worked very closely on GPRA's implementation and oversight felt that GPRA was fading out in favor of the President's Management Agenda, although an interviewee from the Department of Labor suggested that the PMA has helped to sustain and give new life to GPRA. In spite of sporadic and sometimes episodic interest or support from Congress, virtually all interviewees articulated that GPRA-mandated processes (but often with the exception of the workload it entails) have made a difference and are eminently beneficial to overall agency management. Interviewees generally reported that the processes mandated by GPRA were very much a part of current government and agency culture, and many suggested that they would continue many of the practices set by GPRA if GPRA requirements were to cease.

Parenthetically, two interviewees who worked with the drafting of GPRA suggested that the extent to which GPRA is fading marks the extent of its success—claiming that its intellectual founders felt they could claim success if the acronym faded from the lexicon, but the statutory requirements remained entrenched in government agency culture. These interviewees added that the Bush administration's PMA would not be possible without the solid

groundwork set by GPRA in the areas of defining missions, setting strategic goals, and measuring performance.

One problem associated with waning congressional interest is the potential for GPRA compliance to degenerate into a mere paperwork exercise. This could become a source of tension between careerists and politicals if GPRA becomes a compliance exercise and the departmental operations begin to deviate or "creep" from departmental missions and goals established per GPRA. Additionally, tensions between careerists and politicals may increase if competing goals and performance measures exist between executive reform efforts and GPRA. However, another program director noted that even if congressional interest is waning, GPRA-generated performance and outcome information is utilized "when public interests representing their clients for state and local governments go to testify on the Hill about our effectiveness."

Finding 8. Interviewees in all three agencies reported a positive shift in department culture and internal management practices and generally attributed these shifts to GPRA.

Many interviewees suggested that GPRA acted as a mechanism to compel them to review and revise their management practices. A few interviewees confided that, initially, GPRA was viewed as "another flavor of the month" and not taken very seriously, but noted that the overall process of developing and honing strategic plans and performance measurement systems has been beneficial to overall agency management. Indeed, one NASA careerist stated:

... and that's one of the positive sides of all of this; it drove us to think about longer-term outcome goals. Because we certainly had to think in terms of what are we really doing in the long run, what kind of knowledge are we basically trying to achieve 10 years out.… And every year we'll come back and evaluate internally our progress against the road map that we've bought into with our stakeholders and the OMB and Congress and everybody else.

A career interviewee within HUD characterized the shift as very positive and asserted that GPRA has brought a new discipline to HUD management that is based on the annual budget. Another HUD interviewee characterized the overall agency culture as "slow moving and bureaucratic," but suggested that GPRA has helped to streamline certain aspects of management. Moreover, an interviewee from NASA added that:

... another area it's been useful is that it's been a forcing mechanism to really take the strategic planning process seriously. And our strategic planning activity is rather intensive in terms of getting our community on board and how our strategic plan has a tie-in with our longer-term goals. We can better manage internally and know how the science questions we're pursuing and the dollars that can be attributed—not at specific targets in any enforceable measure but at the macro level. So there is a relationship

now that we feel more comfortable having dollars tied to the outcomes and annual goals and long-term outcome goals.

Finding 9. Under some conditions, the GPRA and PMA process may help to exacerbate tensions between political appointees and career managers.

Interviewees suggested that at times the sheer volume of compliance activities for GPRA, PART, and the PMA could increase tensions between politicals and careerists. One interviewee noted that a significant amount of her time and resources was devoted to meeting requirements and that these resources may be better allocated elsewhere.

Additionally, one political noted that agencies have "dictates from multiple masters"—for example, the Hill, other agencies, the executive branch, OMB, and political appointees. Thus, GPRA and PMA compliance also has the potential to place careerists at odds with any one of these organizations.

GPRA, PMA, and most performance management systems are predicated on the idea that performance information will inform the budgetary process. In theory, this process should remain apolitical. However, one interviewee explained that politics creeps into this process and that natural tensions between political appointees and career managers can result, especially when careerists are caught in the middle of executive and legislative budgetary conflicts. For instance, PART links program performance to the budgetary process; programs that meet performance goals should see

increased budgets and poor performers should see budgetary cuts. However, he suggested that politicals might not fully understand that "you cannot fully avoid the congressional part" of the budgetary process. Tensions can arise when programs favored by the executive branch are cut by Congress or when programs that are cut by the executive branch are restored by Congress. In the first example, careerists must continue to execute the program despite a reduction in available resources; in the second example, careerists must continue to faithfully execute a program that their political bosses may not really care about.

Conclusions

The interviews conducted for this study suggest that the results-oriented managerial reforms embodied in GPRA and the PMA have helped to mitigate historic tensions between political appointees and career civil servants by creating a common ground around achieving mission results. Since many of these perennial tensions stem from long-standing differences in perspectives, they are not easily reconciled. Indeed, a long litany of previous administrative reform efforts has largely been ineffectual in reconciling these relationships. However, the statutory basis and longevity of GPRA—and subsequent supporting efforts in the PMA—have helped to change agency culture and institutionalize many of the tenets of performance management in the federal workplace. Moreover, the Bush administration's emphasis on the PMA has helped breathe new life into GPRA. According to many interviewees in this study, it is also likely that aspects of the PMA, including current efforts to connect performance reporting to the budgetary process,

will become institutionalized and will survive the Bush administration.

The performance-oriented frameworks offered by GPRA and PMA afford career managers and political appointees many opportunities to reach across the bureaucratic divide to focus on common objectives—getting results Americans care about. Indeed, the most important lessons are those which help to accelerate mutually beneficial working relationships by smoothing the often stressful transition of political leadership, creating a common language for career managers and political appointees, and promoting more substantively meaningful policy making by increasing collaboration between these two executive-branch actors.