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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Fact Sheet

Cronyism in the Bush Administration

The Bush Administration has repeatedly appointed inexperienced individuals with political connections to important government posts, including positions with key responsibilities for public health and safety. This has led to legitimate public concern that those in government, particularly those who are relied upon to keep us safe from harm, are not competent or independent in their judgments. According to Comptroller General David Walker, “There needs to be more emphasis on the qualifications of the individuals that have key positions.”¹

This fact sheet provides a few examples of individuals who appear to lack appropriate credentials who have been appointed to important public safety positions:

Michael Brown. Mr. Brown was the Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Mr. Brown had little, if any, disaster-related experience prior to joining the agency. His previous position was as the commissioner of judges and stewards for the International Arabian Horse Association, a breeders’ and horse-show organization.² Mr. Brown is a long-time friend of the previous head of FEMA, Joseph Allbaugh, who served as President Bush’s campaign manager in the 2000 election.

Daniel Craig. Mr. Craig is the Director of FEMA’s Recovery Division. In this capacity, he “is responsible for planning and executing the federal government’s recovery efforts following major disasters and emergencies, both natural and mad made.”³ Mr. Craig’s previous experience includes directing the eastern regional office of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, lobbying for the Natural Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and serving as a political fundraiser and campaign advisor.⁴

¹ *Appointees Must Be More Qualified, GAO Says*, Federal Times (Sept. 26, 2005).

² *Brown Pushed From Last Job: Horse Group: FEMA Chief Had to Be ‘Asked to Resign’*, Boston Herald (Sept. 3, 2005).

³ Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Daniel A. Craig: Director, Recovery Division* (online at <http://www.fema.gov/about/bios/craig.shtm>).

⁴ *Leaders Lacking Disaster Experience*, Washington Post (Sept. 9, 2005).

Patrick J. Rhodes. Mr. Rhodes is FEMA’s Chief of Staff. As Chief of Staff, “he is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency and for directing the implementation of [the FEMA Director’s] priorities and policies.”⁵ Mr. Rhodes “is a former television reporter who came to Washington as advance deputy director for Bush’s Austin-based 2000 campaign.”⁶

Julie Myers. Ms. Myers is President Bush’s nominee for the position of Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at DHS. In that capacity, Ms. Myers would oversee the nation’s second-largest investigative agency and would be responsible for enforcement of immigration and customs law, as well as homeland security. She is currently a special assistant handling personnel issues. Republican Senator George Voinovich told Ms. Myers at her nomination hearing, “I’d really like to have [DHS Secretary Mike Chertoff] spend some time with us, telling us personally why he thinks you’re qualified for the job. Because based on your resume, I don’t think you are.”⁷ Her uncle is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers; she is related by marriage to Missouri Senator Kit Bond; and her husband is Chief of Staff of the Department of Homeland Security.

Stewart Simonson. Mr. Simonson is the Assistant Secretary for Public Health Emergency Preparedness at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). He is currently the nation’s principal government official in charge of protecting our civilian population from acts of bioterrorism. Mr. Simonson is a lawyer, not a medical expert. He graduated from law school in 1994 and previously worked at AMTRAK. Mr. Simonson served as legal counsel to former HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson when Mr. Thompson was Governor of Wisconsin, and he became Mr. Thompson’s deputy general counsel at HHS from 2001 until 2003. At a House Government Reform hearing on July 14, 2005, Mr. Simonson claimed he had sufficient funds to purchase influenza vaccine and antiviral medication for the nation.⁸ The next day, his office submitted a funding request to Congress seeking an additional \$150 million for flu vaccine and antiviral medication.⁹

⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Patrick James Rhode, Chief of Staff* (online at <http://www.fema.gov/about/bios/rhode.shtm>).

⁶ *Leaders Lacking Disaster Experience*, Washington Post (Sept. 9, 2005).

⁷ *How Many More Mike Browns Are Out There?*, Time Magazine (Sept. 25, 2005)

⁸ House Committee on Government Reform, *One Year Later: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Project BioShield*, 109th Congress (July 14, 2005).

⁹ Office of Management and Budget, *Fiscal 2006 Budget Amendments* (July 15, 2005) (online at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/amendments/amendment_7_15_05.pdf).