

What Do White House Lawyers Earn?

By: Leslie White

The Obama administration today released the annual salaries of all White House Office staffers, including salary information for its 46 staff lawyers. Obama promised when he took office to freeze the salaries of all workers making more than \$100K. While he kept his promises, White House legal salaries remain relatively modest compared to those of law firm attorneys. What do White House lawyers earn? Who is the highest paid legal counsel in Obama's administration?

His name is Gregory B. Craig, whose titles are Assistant to the President and Counsel to the President. The Yale Law School graduate, who held the same position in the Clinton administration, earns \$172,200 per year. Gregory Craig has a history of representing numerous high-profile clients, including John Hinckley, Jr., who was acquitted of the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan by reason of insanity. Craig represented Senator Ted Kennedy during the 1991 rape trial of William Kennedy Smith (The Senator himself faced no charges in this trial.). Craig represented the Cuban father of Elián González during the 2000 child custody dispute that ended when U.S. Marshals enforced court orders that the child be moved from the Florida home of relatives. As assistant to the President and special counsel in the White House of President Bill Clinton, Craig directed the team defending Clinton against impeachment. He was a foreign policy advisor to Senator Edward Kennedy and to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Craig left a very lucrative private practice with the Washington, D.C.-based law firm of Williams & Connolly, where he was a partner before becoming President Obama's counsel. His previous year's income, in a 2009 report, was a salary of \$1.7 million from Williams & Connolly, where he had been a partner since 1999.

Rounding out the top five counsels in Obama's administration are:

Virginia R. Canter, Counsel: \$163,940

Cassandra Butts, Deputy Assistant and Deputy Counsel to the President: \$158,500

Nancy-Ann E. DeParle, Counsel to the President, Office of Health Care Reform Director: \$158,500

Mary B. DeRosa, Deputy Assistant and Deputy Counsel to the President: \$158,500

Cassandra Butts is a former vice president at the liberal Center for American Progress, and Mary DeRosa, deputy counsel for national security, previously worked on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Others with the title of deputy White house counsel include Daniel Meltzer (\$158,500), a longtime Harvard Law professor who is principal deputy. The list includes 12 people with the title of associate White House counsel, at a salary of \$130,500. Not all of Obama's legal counsels are pulling six figures. In fact, on the low end of the spectrum, you can find counsels such as Director of Counsel Operations, Matthew R. Kennedy, who earns \$62,000 a year.