



THE WHITE HOUSE TRANSITION PROJECT

1997-2021

Smoothing the Peaceful Transfer of Democratic Power

THE BIDEN 100 DAYS

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING – APRIL 2021

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The White House Transition Project

The organization charts shown here provide information on two areas of White House staffing: organizational units and numbers of commissioned officers.

White House Organizational Units: White House Offices

No matter which party controls the presidency, the basic organization of White House offices remains the same. The information and decision making needs are similar from one President to another. All recent presidents have had White House offices devoted to policy, internal decision making and implementation, and a President's relationships outside of the White House. Here are some of the basic units within each category:

- **Policy:** Domestic Policy Council, National Economic Council, National Security Council,
- **Internal Decision Making and Implementation Process:** Personnel, White House Counsel, Staff Secretary, Cabinet Affairs, Management and Administration, Military Office, Oval Office Operations, Scheduling and Advance.
- **Presidential Relationships Outside of the White House:** Press Office, Communications, Legislative Affairs, Public Liaison and Public Engagement to deal with interest groups, Intergovernmental Affairs, Political Affairs /Political Strategy.

Comparing the organization charts accompanying this summary, in their first year White House offices in recent administrations are remarkably similar in their office structures.

- President Biden's White House follows a hierarchical structure with clear reporting lines that contrasts with the Trump White House sometimes confused first year model. The Biden model, though, harkens back to the orderly structures of other recent administrations.
- The additional units in the Biden White House structure, such as a group of single-issue councils, are focused on his signature issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of related legislation and executive actions.
- President Biden has carved a different path than his predecessors in terms of his hiring of women for his top White House staff. 62% of his Assistant to the President titled staff are women. In their first years, 27% of President Trump's Assistants to the President were women and President Obama chose women to fill 36% of his Assistant positions.

The White House Leadership Team: Commissioned Officers

As in any hierarchical organization, there is a top level White House staff that is limited in its numbers by law and budget. Commissioned staff form the highest levels of White House staff in terms of their responsibilities and salaries. Comparing first year organization charts for recent presidents, over the years there is an increase in the number of Assistants to the President as well as more Deputy and Special Assistants. The emphasis on staffing up a White House is a reflection of the enhanced White House role in national policy development and implementation.

- *Assistant to the President* staff are the highest level staff with top White House salaries and responsibility. Limited to around 25 at a time, Assistants to the President form the principals who are a President's closest advisers. They are the senior aides who present alternatives to the President.
- *Deputy Assistants to the President* discuss policy alternatives and make recommendations to the Assistants. Depending on the subject, Cabinet officials often attend. Although there is some variation in numbers depending on salary levels, usually a President has around 25 Deputy Assistants at a time.

- *Special Assistants to the President* implement decisions and arrange events. There are typically 70 or more Special Assistants.

The accompanying charts show the locations of high-level staff concentrations. Those concentrations reflect a President's staff and action priorities.

- In recent years, the Chief of Staff's office has an increasing number of Assistants to the President reflecting a pattern of viewing policy and communications from a central location as well as by offices tasked with those responsibilities.
- There are offices at an Assistant level during some administrations while the same offices are headed by deputy-level staff in others. During the course of recent administrations, Political Affairs, Public Liaison, Intergovernmental Affairs, Cabinet Affairs, Personnel, Staff Secretary, Scheduling and Advance, Oval Office Operations, and Management and Administration have seen fluctuations in the importance a President and his team place on the offices. When an upcoming election or a flurry of policy initiatives is in order, the offices might rise in importance from the Deputy to the Assistant-level.
- Policy offices have remained steady in being headed throughout a President's term by an Assistant to the President and, except for Clinton's first year, so too has the Press Office, the Chief of Staff, White House Counsel, and Legislative Affairs. Those assignments reflect their continuing importance in a President's decision-making process.
- The National Security Council has experienced an increase in the number of its directorates and offices. Presidents speak of restructuring the NSC and reducing its numbers, but instead the staff and directorates often increase in size.
- The growing importance of the Vice President and First Lady is reflected in the number of commissioned staff and the assignment of Assistant and Deputy levels to those two offices. Both officials are important presidential surrogates.

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Begun in 1998, the White House Transition Project provides information to help streamline the process of transition from one administration to the next. A nonpartisan, nonprofit group, the WHTP brings together political science scholars who study the presidency and White House operations to write analytical pieces on relevant topics about presidential transitions, presidential appointments, and crisis management. Since its creation, it has participated in the 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017, and now the 2021 transitions. WHTP coordinates with government agencies and other non-profit groups, e.g., the US National Archives. It also consults with foreign governments and organizations interested in governmental transitions, worldwide. See the project at <https://whitehousetransitionproject.org>

The White House Transition Project produces a number of materials, including:

- **WHITE HOUSE OFFICE ESSAYS:** Based on interviews with key personnel who have borne these unique responsibilities, including former White House Chiefs of Staff; Staff Secretaries; Counsels; Press Secretaries, etc., WHTP produces briefing books for each of the critical White House offices. These briefs compile the best practices suggested by those who have carried out the duties of these office. With the permission of the interviewees, interviews are available on the National Archives website page dedicated to this project:
- **WHITE HOUSE ORGANIZATION CHARTS.** The charts cover administrations from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama and help new White House staff understand what to expect when they arrive and how their offices changed over time or stayed the same.
- **TRANSITION ESSAYS.** These reports cover a number of topics suggested by White House staff, including analyses of the patterns of presidential appointments and the Senate confirmation process, White House and presidential working routine, and the patterns of presidential travel and crisis management. It also maintains ongoing reports on the patterns of interactions with reporters and the press in general as well as White House staffing.
- **INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT.** The WHTP consults with international governments and groups interested in transitions in their governments. In 2017 in conjunction with the Baker Institute, the WHTP hosted a conference with emerging Latin American leaders and in 2018 cosponsored a government transitions conference with the National Democratic Institute held in November 2018 in Montreal, Canada.

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Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

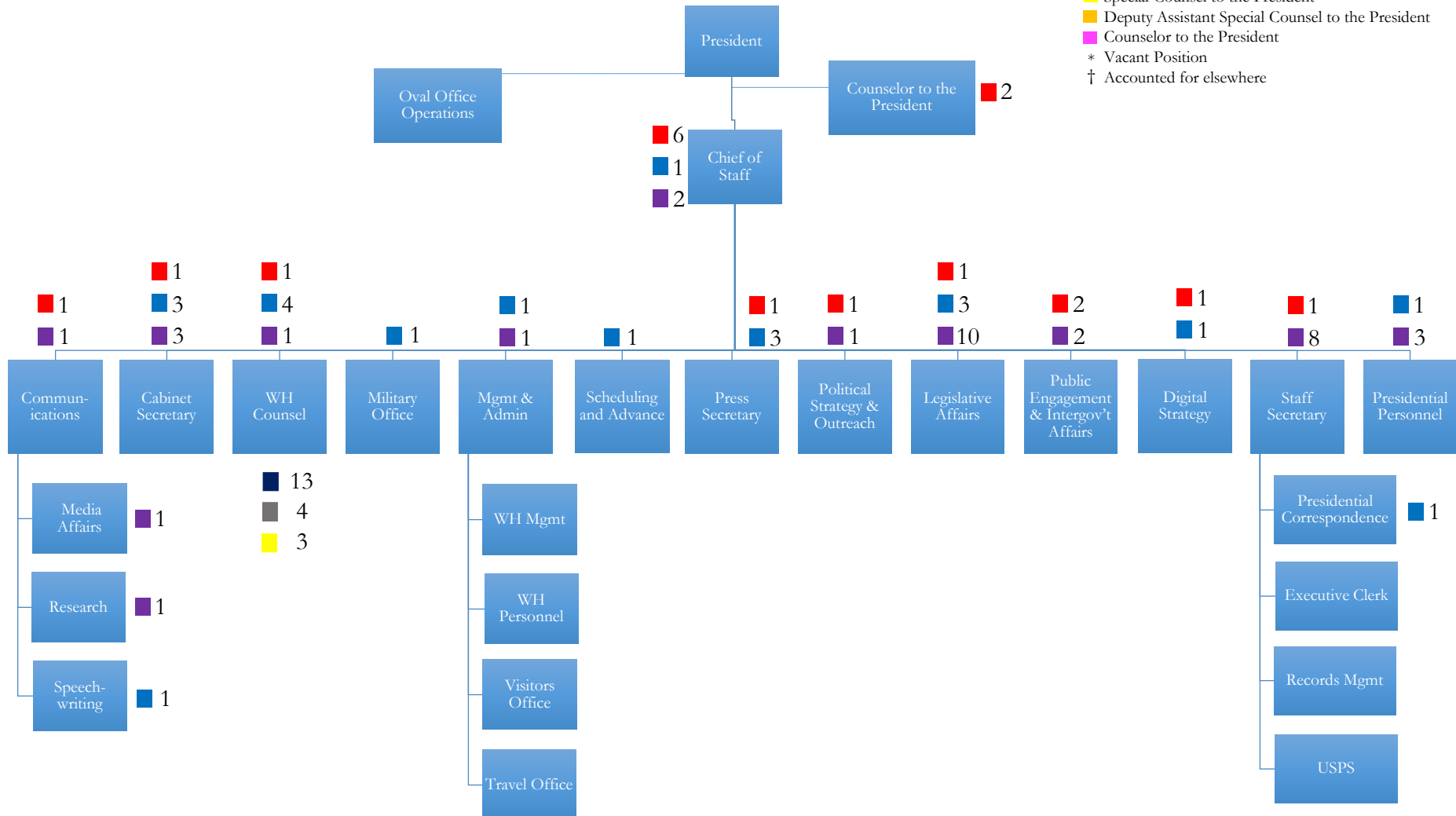
White House Office

Joe Biden

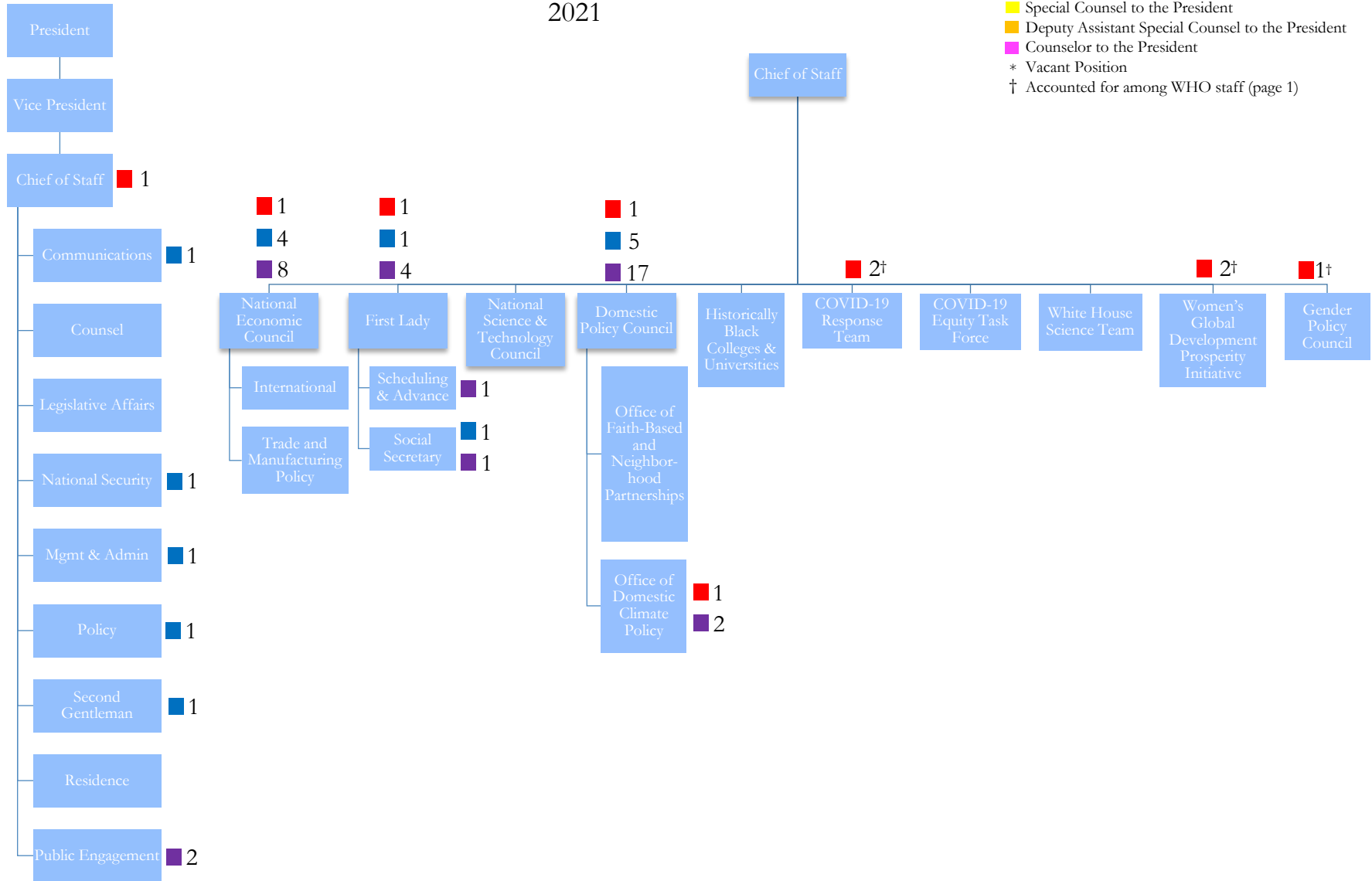
2021

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Advisor to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Assistant Special Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position
- † Accounted for elsewhere



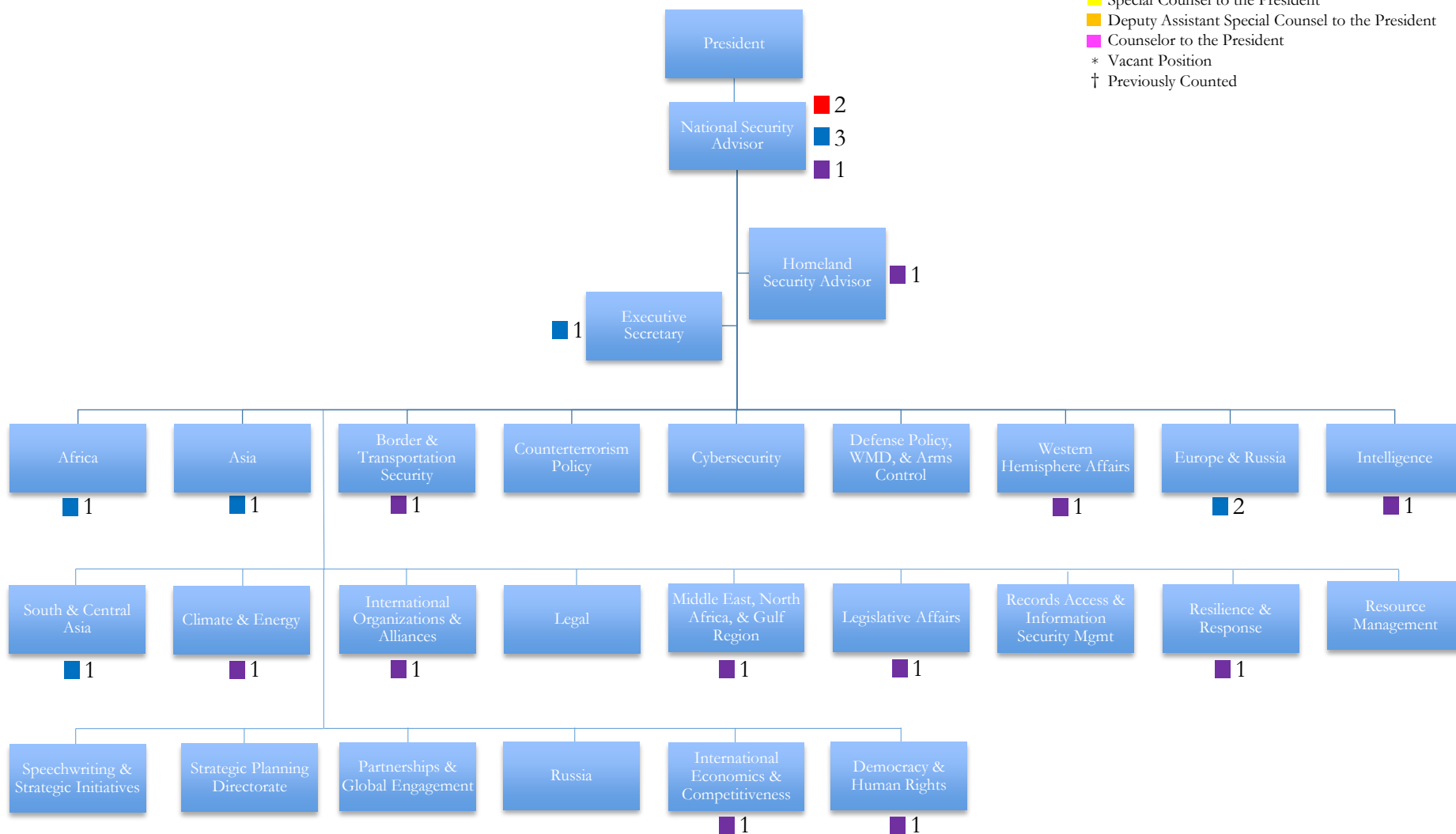
Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff
Vice President, National Economic Council, National Science and
Technology Council, First Lady, & Domestic Policy Council
Joe Biden
2021



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff
National Security Council
Joe Biden
2021

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Advisor to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Assistant Special Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position
- † Previously Counted



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

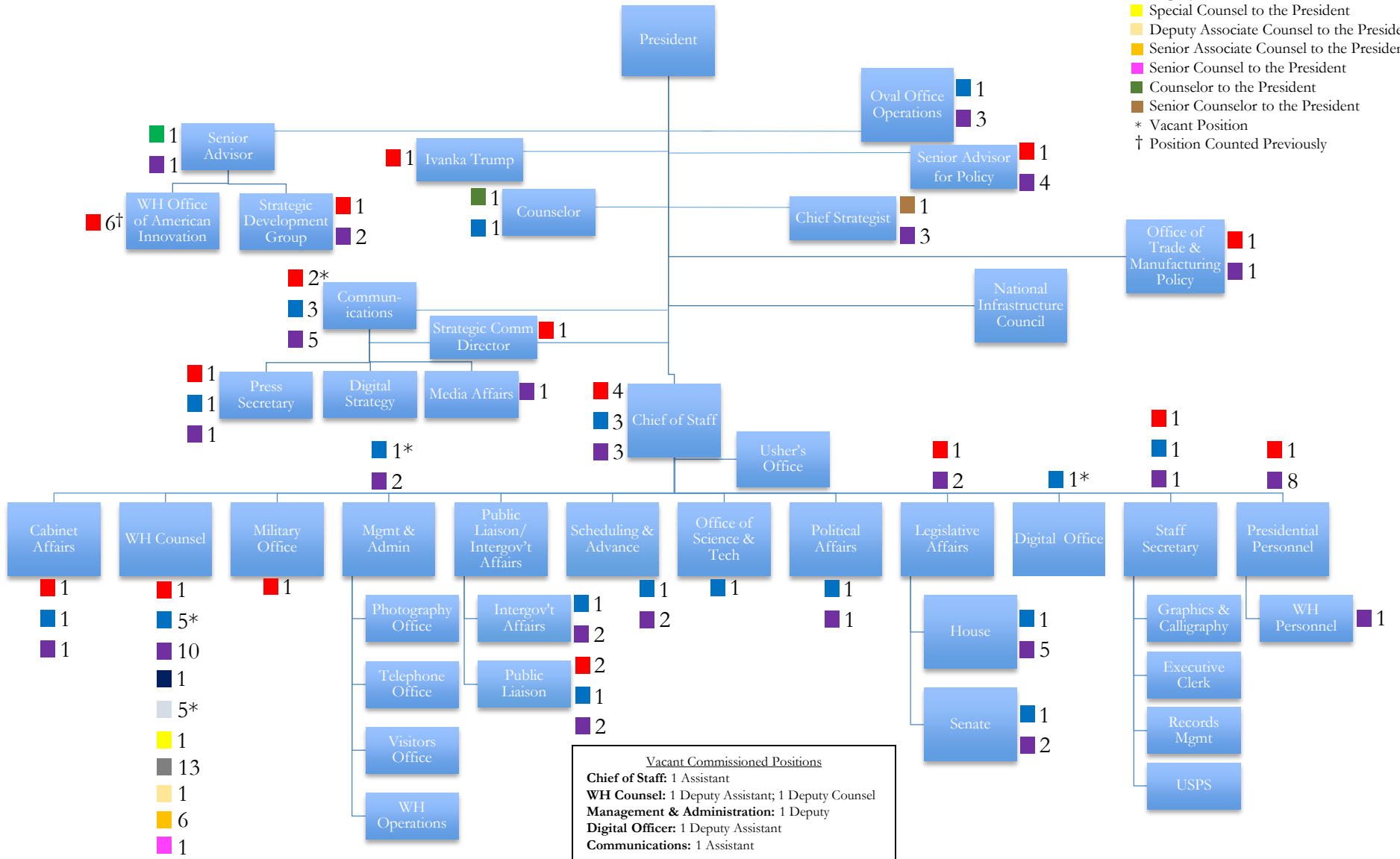
White House Office – July 27

Donald Trump

2017

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- Senior Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position
- † Position Counted Previously

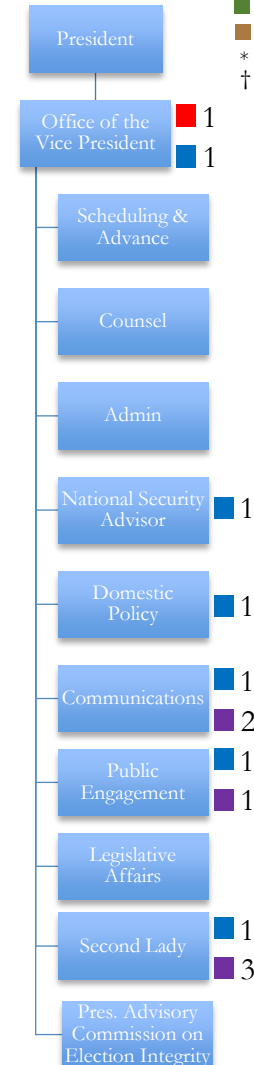
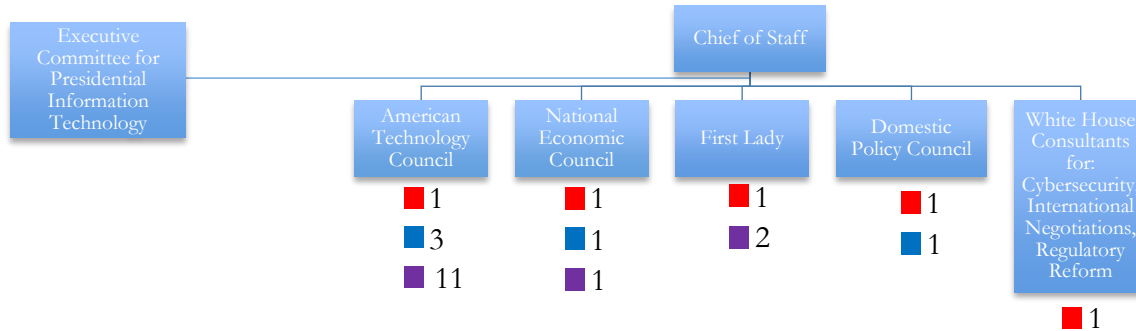


Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

Executive Committee for Presidential Information Technology,
American Technology Council, National Economic Council, Domestic
Policy Council, WH Consultants, WH Office of American Innovation,
& Vice President
Donald Trump
2017

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- Senior Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position
- † Position Counted Previously



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

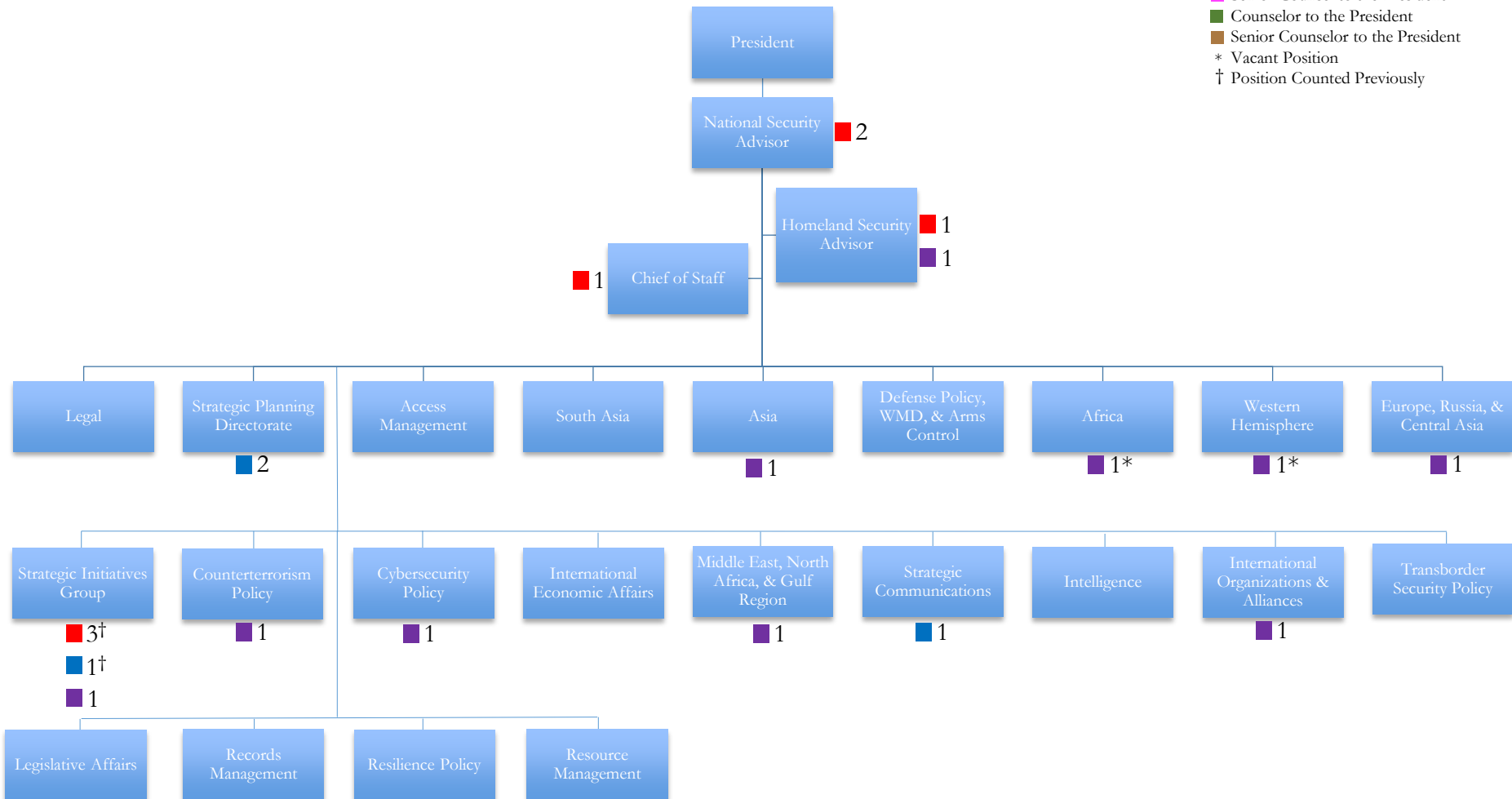
National Security Council

Donald Trump

2017

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- Senior Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position
- † Position Counted Previously

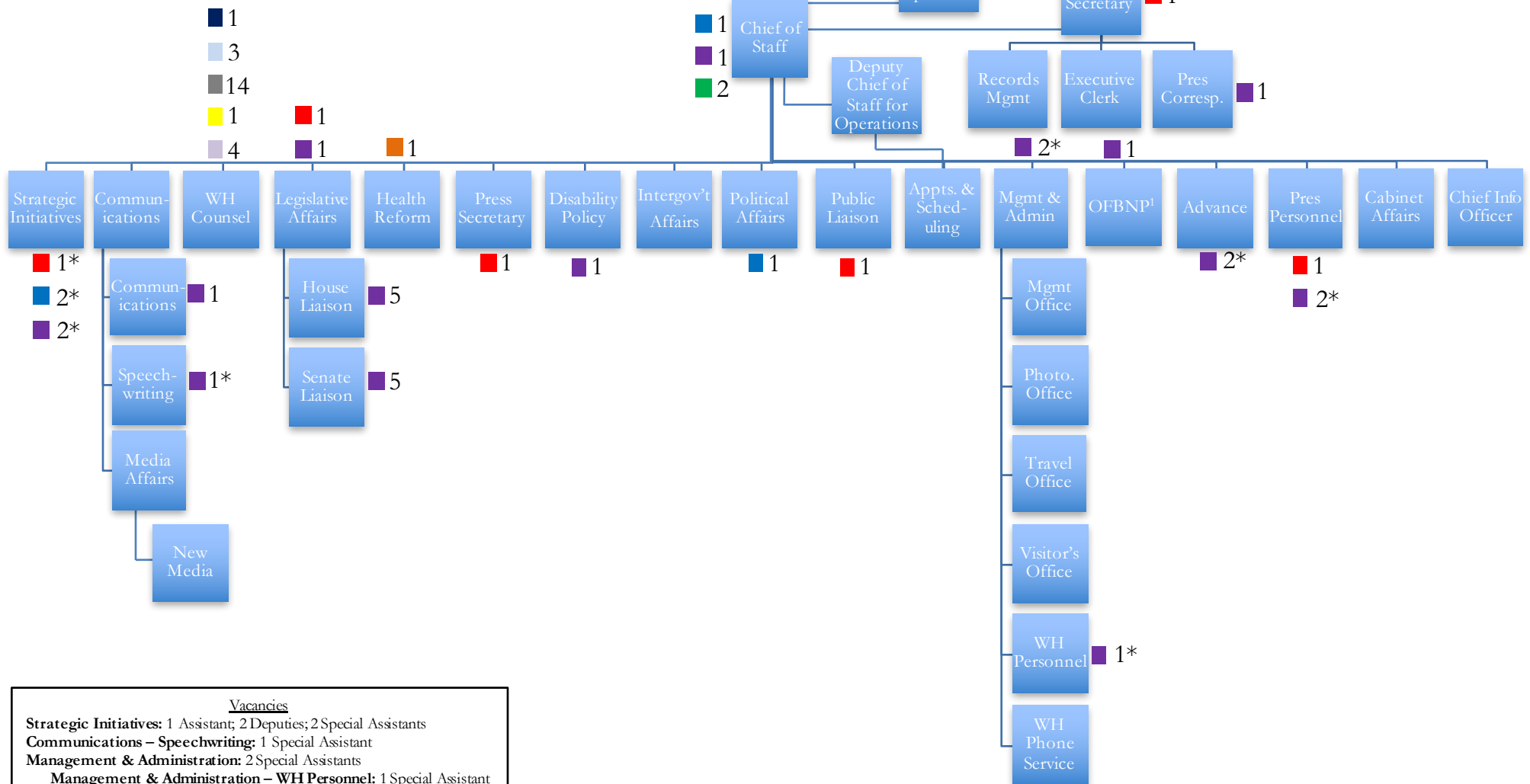


Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff White House Office Barack Obama

2009

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Deputy Associate Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position



Vacancies

Strategic Initiatives: 1 Assistant; 2 Deputies; 2 Special Assistants
Communications – Speechwriting: 1 Special Assistant
Management & Administration: 2 Special Assistants
Management & Administration – WH Personnel: 1 Special Assistant
Presidential Personnel: 1 Special Assistant
Advance: 2 Special Assistant

Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

First Lady, Vice President, & Office of Admin

Barack Obama

2009

Key

Assistant to the President

Deputy Assistant to the President

Special Assistant to the President

Senior Advisor to the President

Counsel to the President

Associate Counsel to the President

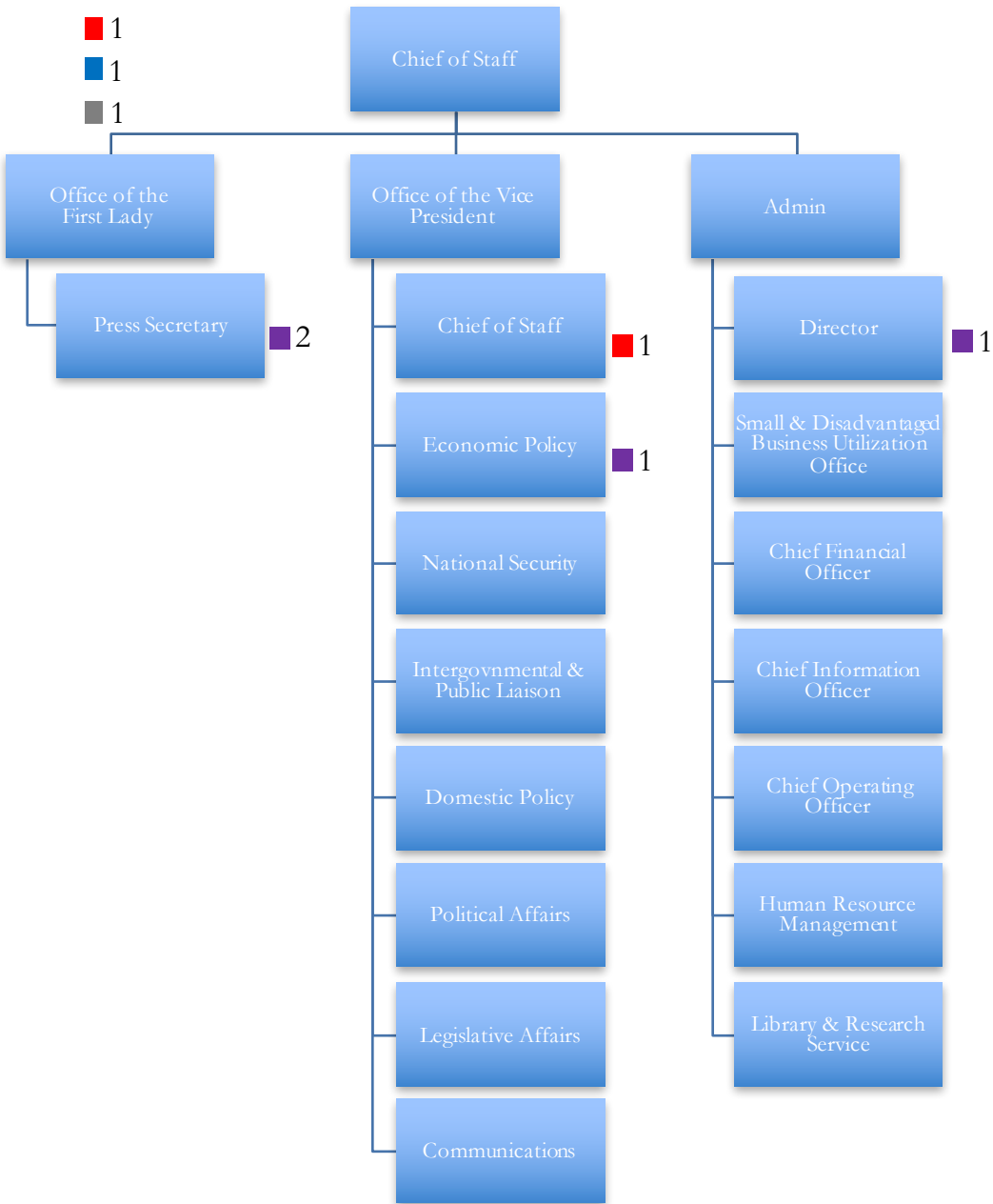
Deputy Counsel to the President

Special Counsel to the President

Deputy Associate Counsel to the President

Counselor to the President

* Vacant Position



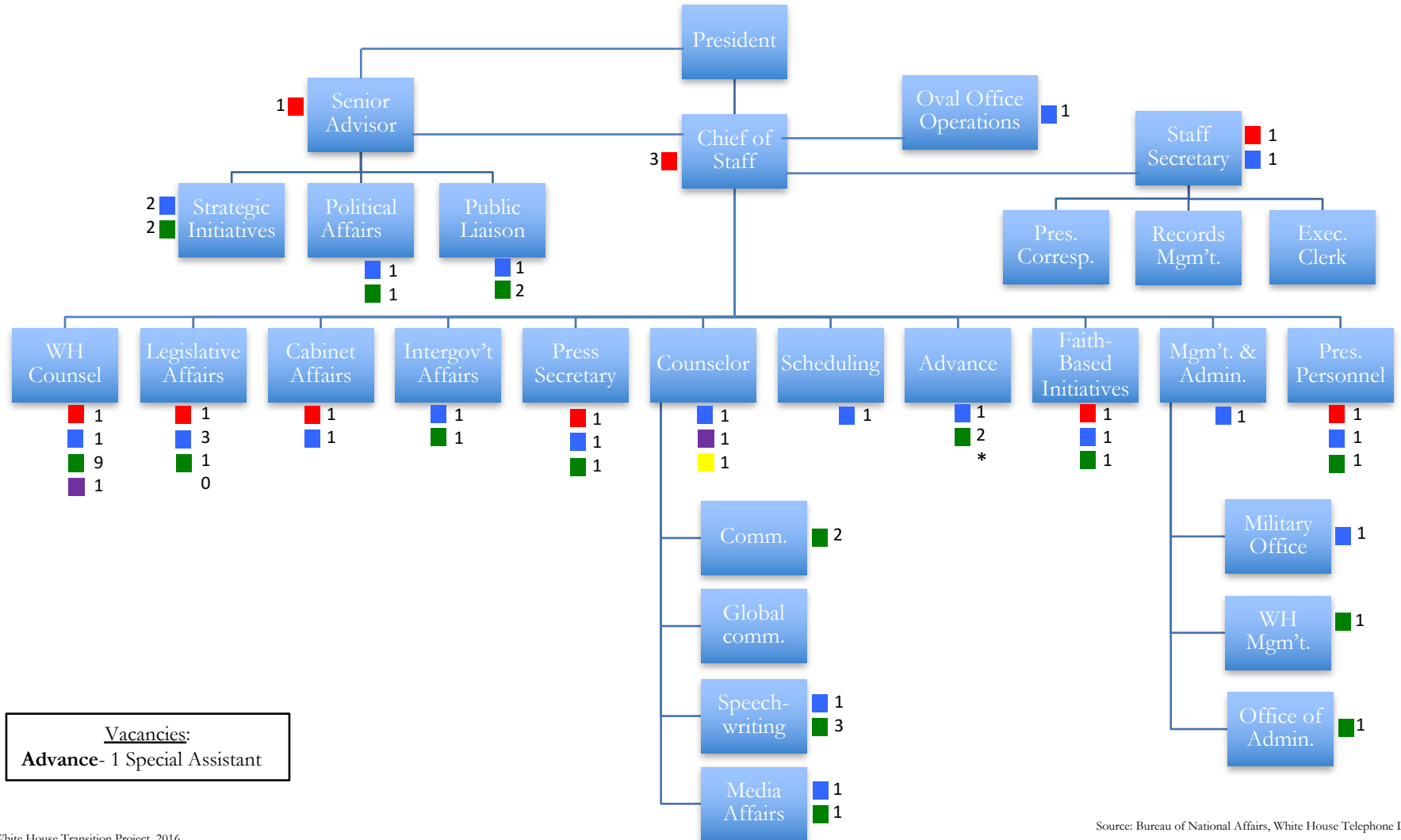
Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

White House Office

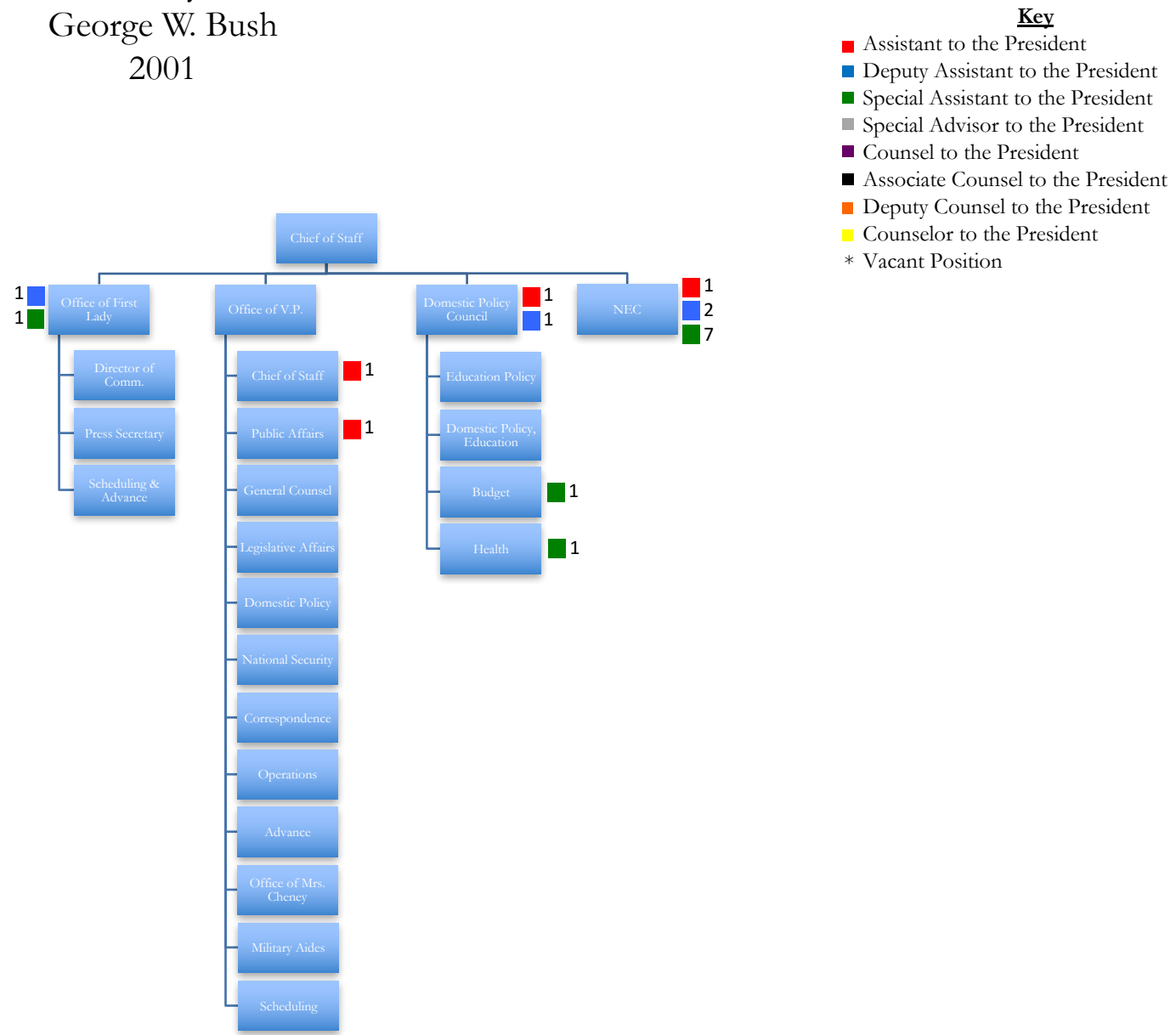
George W. Bush

2001

- Key**
- Assistant to the President
 - Deputy Assistant to the President
 - Special Assistant to the President
 - Special Advisor to the President
 - Counsel to the President
 - Associate Counsel to the President
 - Deputy Counsel to the President
 - Counselor to the President
 - * Vacant Position



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff
First Lady, Vice President, Domestic Policy Council, National Economic Council
George W. Bush
2001



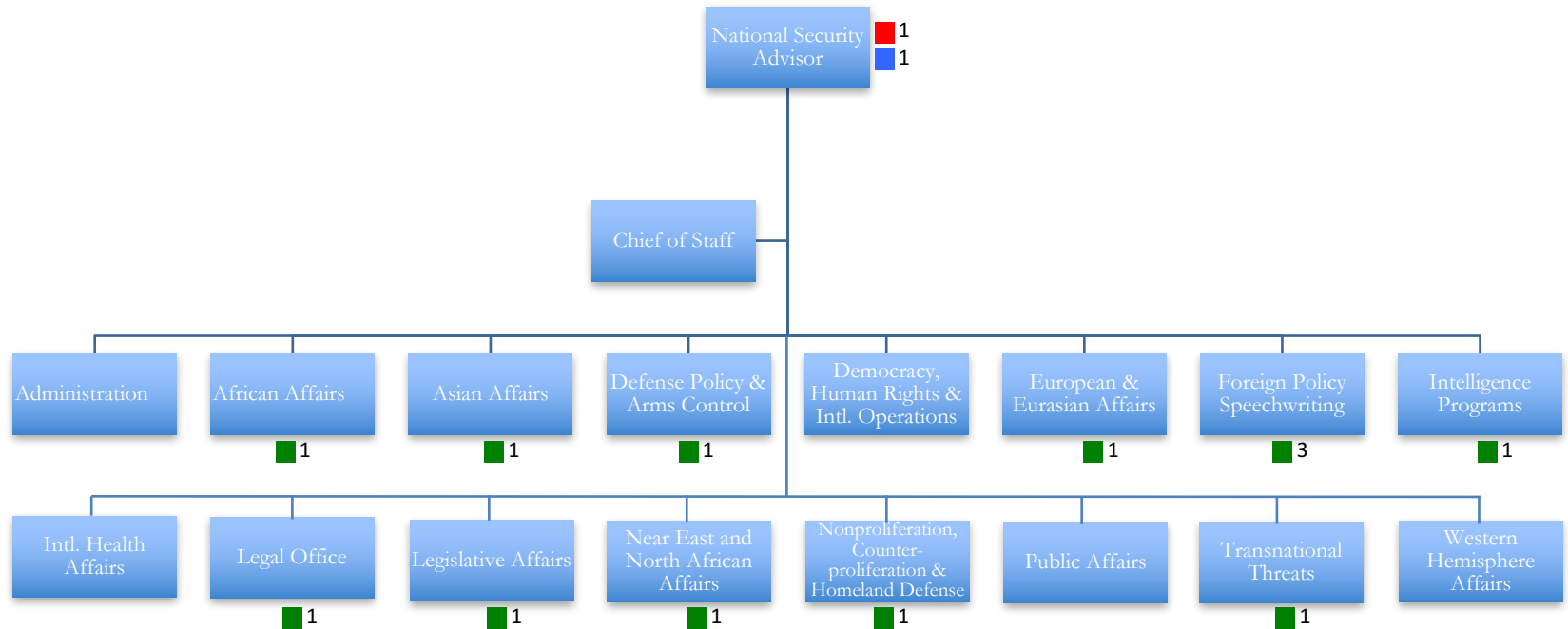
Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff

National Security Council

George W. Bush

2001

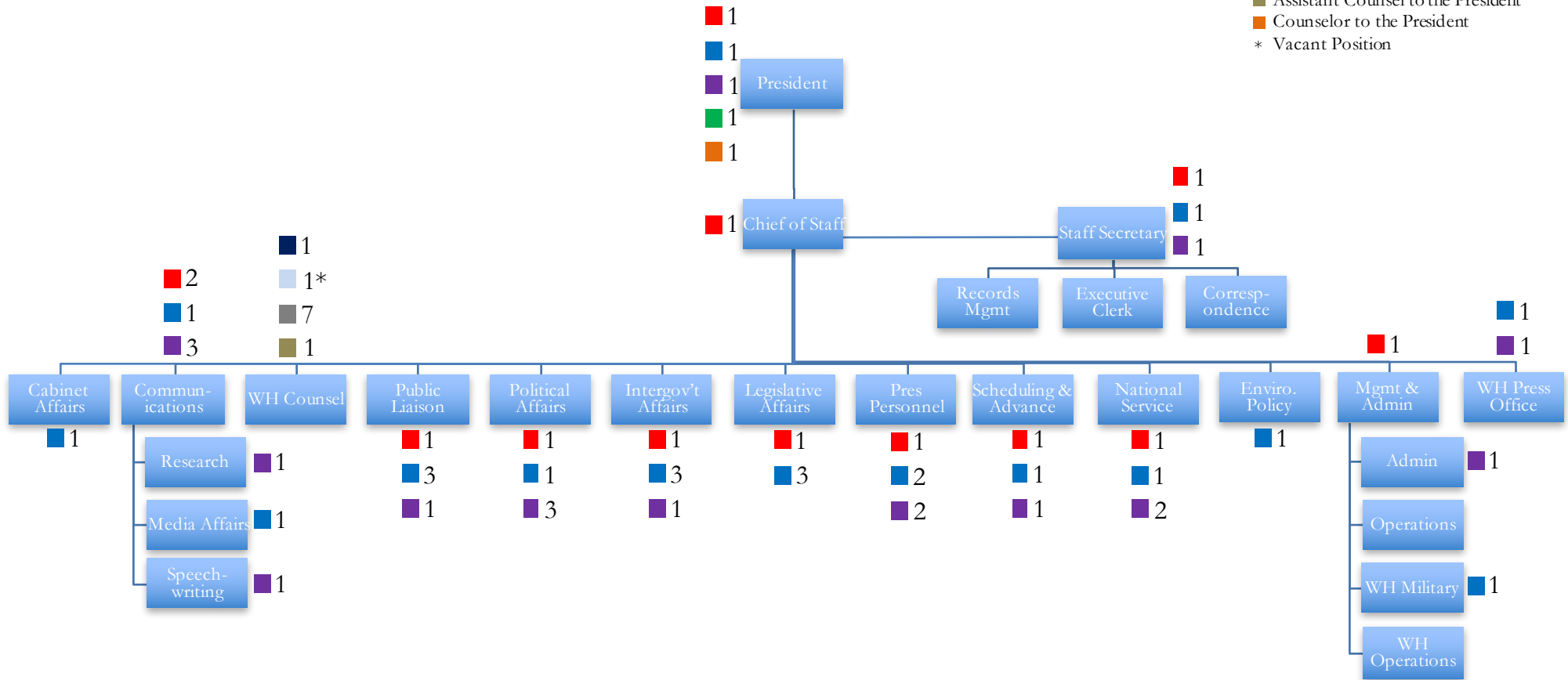
- Key**
- Assistant to the President
 - Deputy Assistant to the President
 - Special Assistant to the President
 - Special Advisor to the President
 - Counsel to the President
 - Associate Counsel to the President
 - Deputy Counsel to the President
 - Counselor to the President
 - * Vacant Position



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff White House Office Bill Clinton 1993

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Special Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Assistant Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position

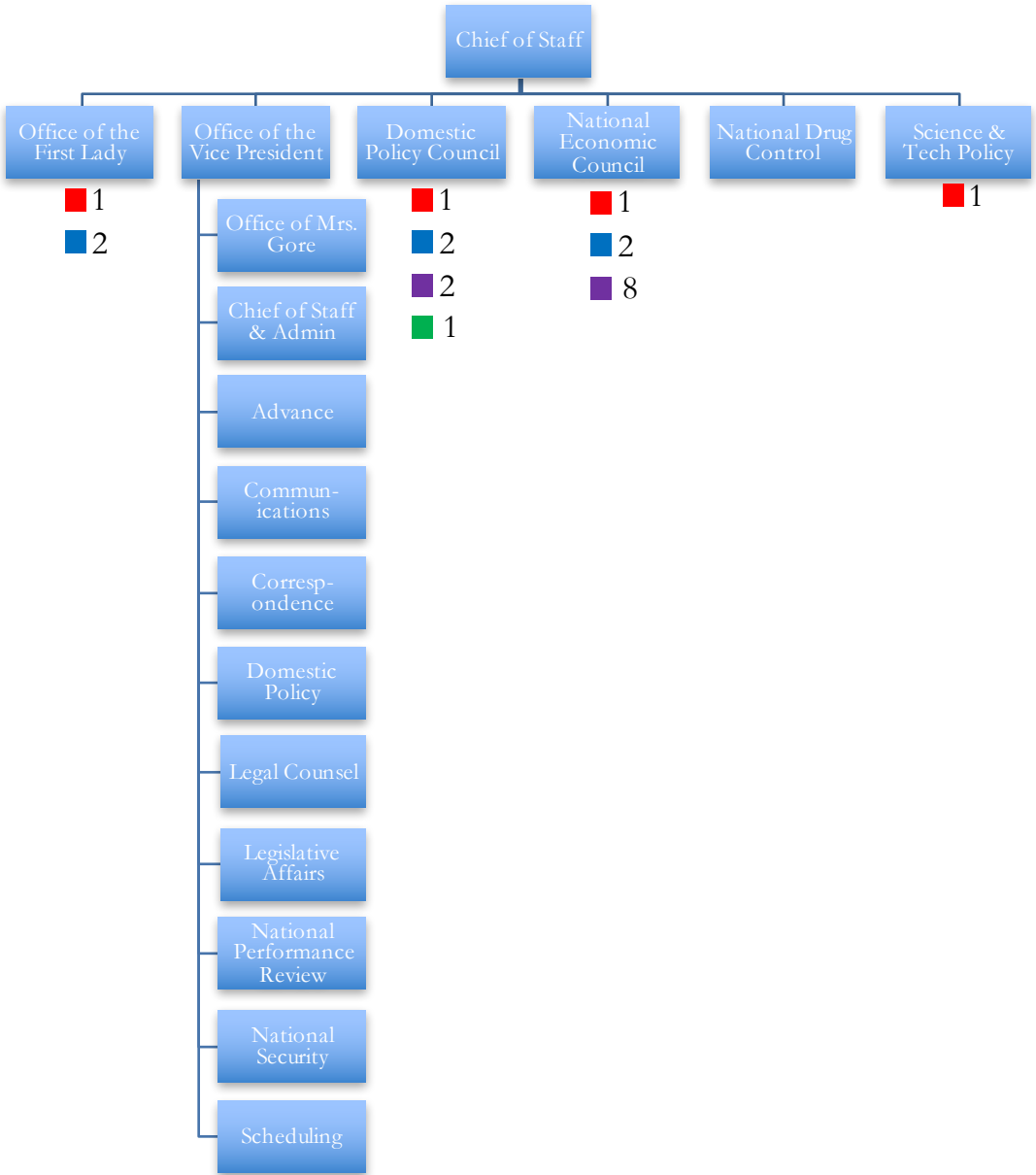


Vacancies
WH Counsel: 1 Deputy Counsel

Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff
First Lady, Vice President, Domestic Policy
Council, National Economic Council
Bill Clinton
1993

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Special Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Assistant Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position



Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff
National Security Council
Bill Clinton
1993

Key

- Assistant to the President
- Deputy Assistant to the President
- Special Assistant to the President
- Senior Advisor to the President
- Counsel to the President
- Associate Counsel to the President
- Deputy Counsel to the President
- Special Counsel to the President
- Special Associate Counsel to the President
- Senior Associate Counsel to the President
- Assistant Counsel to the President
- Counselor to the President
- * Vacant Position

