

washingtonpost.com

Promises Tracked

By Stephen Barr
Wednesday, January 2, 2008; D08

The Democratic candidates for president are taking aim at federal contracting, which they describe as shoddy and corrupt. The Republican candidates also have ideas about how to fix the bureaucracy and restore trust in Washington.

The presidential campaigns are in high gear this week as Iowans get ready to make their choices, and the contenders' rhetoric is in equally high gear as they pledge to change the government and better manage federal employees.

Among the Democrats, Sen. *Hillary Rodham Clinton* (N.Y.) would cut 500,000 government contractors over 10 years. *John Edwards* has a five-point plan to overhaul federal contracting, and Sen. *Barack Obama* (Ill.) would require all contracts worth more than \$25,000 to be competitively bid.

On the Republican side, *Rudy Giuliani* would cut the civil service by 20 percent by replacing only half of the federal employees likely to retire in the next decade. *Mike Huckabee* would take the Federal Emergency Management Agency out of the Department of Homeland Security and ensure that professionals run FEMA. *Mitt Romney* would review all federal spending, and permit the executive branch to spend as much as 25 percent less than what Congress appropriates.

Those promises and others from the 2008 presidential campaigns are tracked on <http://TheNextGovernment.com>, created by *Donald F. Kettl*, director of the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania. The site, which went live yesterday, is an easy way to check how candidates view government and related policy issues.

"And by looking at what issues are being discussed, and which ones are not, it's an important signal about what issues are most likely to get attention after Inauguration Day," Kettl said.

Kettl noted that *President Bush* outlined key parts of his federal management agenda in a Philadelphia speech given 17 months before he was elected. President *Bill Clinton's* early campaign speeches provided clues that he would pursue a "reinventing government" initiative.

Some of the current candidates' proposals on federal management lack depth and some may be unworkable, Kettl said.

Giuliani, for example, does not explain how he would sustain the Federal Aviation Administration and the Internal Revenue Service under his proposal to cut the federal workforce by 20 percent. Hillary Clinton does not spell out how the government would get its work done if it lost 500,000 contractors, Kettl said.

Still, Clinton, Giuliani and other candidates show concern about improving the performance of the

Advertisement



Credit One
BANK

PLATINUM

4000 3234 5678 9010

12/08 01/10

TRUSTED CUSTOMER

VISA

You can
Rebuild Your Credit.
Get a Credit One Bank* VISA card.

government, and it is an issue where Democratic and GOP candidates share substantial common ground, Kettl said.

Thursday's Iowa voting and next week's New Hampshire primaries will shake up the presidential contest, and Kettl said the Web site will be updated "to track new ideas that surface, refinements that develop and pronouncements that arise out of the campaign."

Kettl has studied a number of White House efforts to improve how the government performs, and his Web site lists some of the key challenges that face the next president in such areas as budgeting, personnel, technology and organizational structure.

"The next president will have no choice but to confront management improvement. Both 9/11 and Katrina made the searing case that management failures can have punishing implications," Kettl said in an e-mail.

"History might well record that Katrina proved the problem from which George W. Bush could never recover, and it was a problem rooted fundamentally in management," Kettl wrote.

"However, nowhere in any of the candidates' plans is there an outline for how the candidates would avoid more such debacles, and nowhere is there a recognition of the importance that solving such problems has."

In Case You Missed the News . . .

The president has signed legislation that would provide most federal employees with an average 3.5 percent raise this year. After "locality pay" adjustments are calculated within the next few days, the 2008 raise should be 4.49 percent in the Washington-Baltimore area, officials estimate.

Military personnel start the year with a 3 percent raise, an automatic adjustment tied to a Labor Department wage index. The fiscal 2008 defense authorization bill called for a 3.5 percent raise for the troops, but Bush rejected the measure because of an Iraq-related snag. White House and Pentagon officials said they would ask Congress to approve an additional .5 percent raise, retroactive to the start of the year.

Layoffs of Defense civilian employees, held out as a possibility for February and March by Pentagon officials, are no longer in the works. No furlough notices were sent because Congress approved \$70 billion in Iraq war funding before leaving for the holidays. That is about a third of what the Pentagon wants for the year, and a Defense Department spokesman said it's possible layoffs will return as an issue later this year.

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

© 2008 The Washington Post Company

Ads by Google

[Gvrmnt Contracts for Bid](#)

Over 5,000 Contracts to Bid On Exclusive Access via Zana Network
www.zananetwork.com

[Federal Fraud](#)

There are Huge Rewards for exposing Fraud against the U.S. Government
www.FederalFraud.com

[Disability Retirement](#)

Help for Federal and Postal Workers Seeking OPM Disability Retirement
FederalDisabilityLawyer.com