

330,000 have own jobs plan: Work for Obama

'Energized' roll of applicants eclipse recent transitions

By Mimi Hall
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — More than 330,000 people have applied for top jobs in the Obama administration, in an unprecedented outpouring of interest spurred by excitement surrounding Barack Obama's election, according to independent groups that monitor presidential transitions.

"President-elect Obama said he wanted to make government cool again," says Max Stier, president of the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service. "We are seeing a massive response."

The numbers dwarf those from previous transitions.

At this point in President Bush's 2000-01 transition, there were 44,000 applicants; in Bill Clinton's 1992-93 transition, there were nearly 135,000, according to Stier's group, which promotes effective government.

Several factors are driving interest, transition watchers say. Among them:

- ▶ The ease with which applicants can apply online at www.change.gov.
- ▶ The desire to help the country during an economic crisis.
- ▶ The pent-up energy of Democrats waiting on the sidelines through eight years of a Republican White House.

Obama has "energized and engaged a whole new group of Americans," says Jennifer Dorn, president of National Academy of Public Administration, an independent, non-profit research group

on governance. "He has made people feel welcome and wanted."

Transition officials say a team of 50 workers is sorting the applications to match applicants to the right jobs based on their experience and qualifications.

"We are staying connected with the very supporters who worked hard to elect Obama and have always said that these same people working in their local communities would be the ones helping to bring the change we need to Washington," transition spokesman Nick Shapiro says.

Rebekka Bonner, 35, who went to Yale Law School and Harvard Business School, earlier this year turned down what she calls a "major promotion" at Goldman Sachs, where she worked as a vice president and assistant general counsel.

Having just paid off her student loans, Bonner said no thanks and headed to Washington, D.C., where she spent seven months working full time, for free, for the Obama campaign.

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Bonner says.

Now, she's hoping for a job, so she can help repair the nation's broken economy and foreign policy, she says.

Only about one in 100 applicants will get jobs — and that could be the downside.

The jobs Obama will fill with political appointees, some of whom need Senate confirmation, represent a tiny fraction of the 1.6 million full-time federal government jobs. The transition hasn't yet released an exact number of how many jobs it will fill with political appointees, but transition watchers say it likely will be between 3,000 and 4,000. The Bush administration currently has 3,300 such positions filled.