



Darrell West (center), vice president and director of Governance Studies, with Pietro S. Nivola (right) and William Galston (left), who became the first Brookings expert to hold the Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies. Zilkha is pictured on the far left and Trustee Victoria P. Sant is at far right.

Governance Studies

From John McCain's stunning comeback in the Republican field to Barack Obama's surprising triumph over Hillary Clinton, the independent voices of Governance Studies experts rung out repeatedly during one of the longest and most extraordinary presidential campaigns in recent memory. The program hit its stride during the general election as McCain faced off against Obama in a historic campaign. Overall, our experts contributed about 70 commentaries, 350 media appearances, and a best-selling book to commemorate a major transition in Washington.

Change was also the mantra inside the program as Governance Studies built stronger capacity in research and advocacy, endowed a scholar chair, and recruited a new director. After more than four years of stewardship, Pietro S. Nivola stepped down as vice president and director of Governance Studies to resume full time his role as the Douglas Dillon Chair in Governmental Studies. His successor is Darrell West, who left Brown University following 26 years of teaching and research to help Governance Studies develop an ambitious, competitive agenda to address gridlock in American government.

"Governance Studies lured me with first-rate scholars committed to improving American democracy and our political system," West said. "Without well-functioning government and legal institutions, this country will lose its respected position among other nations which have long emulated our constitution and the findings of our courts. The work at Brookings is heard among the people who can make a difference."

In West, Brookings found a top-tier academic with a real sense of how politics works. At Brown, West served as the director of the Taubman Center for Public Policy and as a professor of public policy and political science. He received high marks from an impressive range of politicians, academics, journalists, and funders.

A major highlight of the year occurred in June when William Galston became the first Brookings expert to hold the Ezra K. Zilkha Chair in Governance Studies. The Zilkha Chair will tackle some of the hardest questions in the area of political and institutional reform. To mark the occasion, Brookings hosted a speech by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer on international governance and American law.

A Political System Challenged

The program's signature project this year was *Red and Blue Nation*—a project that involved nearly every Governance Studies expert in the exploration of the causes and consequences of partisan polarization.

Conducted in collaboration with the Hoover Institution at Stanford, the three-year study gained a wide audience. Nivola teamed with David W. Brady, deputy director and senior fellow at Hoover to edit *Red and Blue Nation? Volume II*, which built on the first volume (Brookings, 2006), and was released at the height of the presidential primary and caucus season.

“Are we at the dawn, as it’s being said, of a post-partisan age? Trust me, we’re not,” Nivola told participants at a Brookings event on Feb. 15 to release the book. “The partisan divide is deep. It will become keener as the general election progresses. The chasm between the party philosophies of the two—of the Democrats and Republicans—is especially deep in the area of foreign policy.”

Governance Studies held more than 30 events this year, at

which politically diverse views were aired on topics ranging from the rise of the conservative legal movement and religion and the swing voter to prosecutorial misconduct and abuse and terrorists and detainees. Governance Studies experts also participated in major cross-Brookings collaborative activities, including eight Governance Studies experts who contributed to Brookings’s Opportunity 08 project.

This proved a record year for analyses and commentary on general politics. Visiting Fellow Michael McDonald set a pattern for Web editorials on Jan. 9 with “Collapsible Candidates from Iowa to New Hampshire,” a piece that explained the swiftly changing dynamic of the presidential election. Galston followed with several other thought-provoking commentaries for the Internet that were often cited in the



Benjamin Wittes, research director in Public Law.

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media, including a June 4 piece that explained how Obama had run the first true campaign of the 21st century. In addition to regular election updates and citations in the U.S. media, Senior Fellow Thomas Mann, W. Averell Harriman Chair in American Governance, conducted speaking tours in Australia, Russia, China, Singapore, Japan, and Italy. Throughout the primary and caucus season, Senior Fellow E.J. Dionne continued to appear regularly on national television and radio programs “This Week,” “Meet the Press,” and “All Things Considered.”

How exactly does one go about being the president of the United States? Senior Fellow *Emeritus* Stephen Hess, a renowned presidential scholar, wrote a workbook to guide the president-elect through the early thicket of decisions. *What Do We Do Now?* (Brookings, 2008) became widely cited in the days leading up to the election.

Congress: The Broken Branch?

Narrow majorities in both chambers of the 110th Congress meant filibusters in the Senate, tangling over recess appointments, and considerable frustration over what did not happen: immigration reform, a disengagement from Iraq, and a permanent fix for the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) for starters. Offering previews and assessments, Senior Fellows Mann and Sarah Binder joined with American Enterprise Institute resident scholar Norman Ornstein twice to put this Congress, and its record, in perspective.

According to the indicators charted by Mann and Binder in January, this Congress aimed lower and achieved more of its explicit legislative objectives than did the 1995 Republican Congress. Mann and Binder’s indicators, published on the opinion page of *The New York Times*, showed that the new Congress in 2007 was more productive in terms of the number and nature of serious pieces of legislation signed into law.

Justice and Law

Governance Studies broadened its field into constitutional law and executive powers in the administration of counterterrorism efforts. The commentary of Fellow and Research Director in Public Law Benjamin Wittes



Thomas Mann moderates a panel with Senior Fellow Alice Rivlin on the financial bailout package after the House of Representatives first voted to reject it, sending shockwaves through the markets.

PAUL MORIGI



Barack Obama talks with Senior Fellow E.J. Dionne after an Opportunity 08-Tax Policy Center event.

RALPH ALSWANG

published in *The New Republic* and *The Washington Post* provided new insights on Congress's Guantanamo dilemma and on the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). After the Supreme Court issued its Guantanamo opinion in June, Wittes urged Congress and the executive branch to enact a comprehensive legislative solution.

In mid-June, the program capped its Judicial Issues Forum series with a briefing on U.S. Supreme Court rulings during its 2007–2008 term. Moderated by Wittes, the panel included Nonresident Senior Fellow Stuart Taylor Jr. among other experts. Earlier that week, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer spoke on international governance

and American law at an event to inaugurate the new Zilkha chair; Wittes also released his new book, *Law and the Long War: The Future of Justice in the Age of Terror* (Penguin Press, 2008), at a Brookings panel discussion.

**Looking Forward:
The Democracy Project**
Governance Studies's work in

recent years reveals deep fissures in the political system that hinder the ability to make long-term policy decisions in the public interest. America's electoral and governing institutions are not performing at a level commensurate with the challenges of our time. Issues from health care, trade, and climate change to immigration, education, and the deficit require urgent action. As a result, the program has begun a new initiative led by Darrell West to improve our political system.

Three themes guide this project: the need for better cooperation between branches and across parties, the necessity of decisive leadership and coalition-building, and efforts at improved civic and media discourse. The project aims to propose concrete actions to better the functioning of American democracy. ■

BROOKINGS EXPERTS ON EDUCATION

With the American education system lagging behind other advanced industrial nations, interdisciplinary research drawn from across Brookings is critical to finding long-term solutions. And the stakes couldn't be higher: Experts have long recognized that the political and economic well-being of any democracy requires a well-educated citizenry.

The Brown Center on Education Policy examines the problems of the American education system: the impact of curriculums, academic standards and accountability, testing



Russ Whitehurst

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

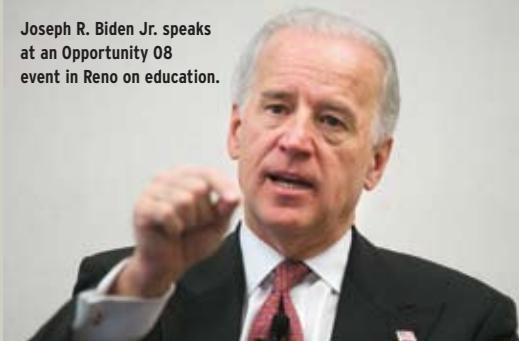
procedures, and achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups, among others. The seventh edition of the Brown Center Report on American Education, released in December 2007, noted the connection between national math scores and the amount of time students spend learning mathematics in different countries. Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst, currently director of the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education, will succeed Tom Loveless as director of the Brown Center on Education in January 2009. Loveless, the Herman and George R.

Brown Chair in Educational Studies, will remain as a senior fellow focusing on education.

Extending beyond the K-12 bookends, experts at the Center on Children and Families study the role of education in economic opportunity and mobility and ways to mobilize the community to help students achieve. Rebecca Blank, who joined the Economic Studies Program this year as the Robert S. Kerr senior fellow, is examining how the external environment around schools affects the outcome of its students.

At home, the Metropolitan Policy Program's Blueprint for American Prosperity Initiative is examining the pressing need to better prepare many young adults in urban centers for higher learning.

Joseph R. Biden Jr. speaks at an Opportunity 08 event in Reno on education.



RALPH ALSWANG

And globally, the Wolfensohn Center for Development has a burgeoning research agenda on early childhood development in poor countries.

One area where experts already have gained traction is with investments in early education. Isabel Sawhill and Nonresident Senior Fellow Jens Ludwig have proposed "Success by Ten"—a program designed to help every child achieve success in school by age 10—which has been included in several lists of congressional policy priorities. ■