THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

A. ALFRED TAUBMAN FORUM ON IMPROVING GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Washington, D.C.
Tuesday, March 22, 2010

IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION AND AGENCY PERFORMANCE

Moderator:

ALLAN A. FRIEDMAN
Fellow
Governance Studies
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

JOSEPH GOLDMAN
Interim Executive Director
Campaign for Stronger Democracy

KATHRYN NEWCOMER
Professor of Public Policy and Public Administration; Director, School of Public Policy
and Public Administration
The George Washington University

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. WEST: Our next panel is going to look at ways to improve transparency, participation and agency performance in the United States, and that session is going to be moderated by Allan Friedman. Allan earned his PhD in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School, he is a Fellow in our Governance Studies Program, and he's also the Research Director for our Center for Technology Innovation, so I'll invite Allan and the other panelists to come up on stage.

MR. FRIEDMAN: So we just heard from the Chief Performance Officer that we know we can do better. So the purpose of this panel I think is to dive down a little bit into the how. And we're fortunate at this time to have a renewed tension in both the way that we think about performance through transparency, through program evaluation, capitalizing on, in some cases, decades of research, and also a renewed emphasis in public participation on both sides of the aisle.

So how can we leverage those two forces is going to be the topic of this panel. We're going to try to combine some of the new results in public participation with some of the new results in the art and science program evaluation to try to move forward and drive performance improvements. And we're fortunate to have, in fact, two experts in those respective fields. We have Joseph Goldman, who is the Interim Executive Director for the Campaign for Stronger Democracy, which is a new coalition that encourages collaboration among reformed advocates, scholars, good government groups and government officials to create a stronger democracy.

And Joe is also a Senior Associate at America Speaks, where he previously served as the Vice President of Citizen Engagement. And through his 12 years at America Speaks, Joseph managed and consulted in some of the world's largest public deliberations on topics of everything from rebuilding the ruins after Katrina, health care reform in California, and the

redevelopment of the World Trade Center site after 911, so he's handled some pretty hairy issues with lots of challenges.

Now, to talk about the challenges of performance, we're very pleased to have Kathryn Newcomer, who is the Director of the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University, where she's taught for almost 30 years. She teaches public and non-profit program evaluation, research, design and applied statistics. On the question of government performance, she's actually worked on both sides. She both conducts research on federal and local government agencies, but she also trains people in these agencies and non-profit organizations to think about program measurement and program evaluation.

She's also an accomplished author. She literally wrote the book on Improving Government Performance back in 1989. Her handbook of Practical Program Evaluation is in its third edition. And most recently she wrote Transformational Leadership, a Leading Change in Public Non-Profit Agencies.

So, Joe, I'd love to start with you to find out – so after a few years of a lot of people in the streets and a lot of effort paid to how do we engage in our government, what do we now know?

MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you. So I didn't write the book on open government, but I think, in part, I'm here because I've been working with my colleagues at America Speaks and some of the folks at the IBM Center for the Business of Government on really looking at open government plans that have been developed by federal agencies and what they say about public participation and open government and what agencies are planning on doing. So I guess what I'd like to do is just take a few minutes initially to kind of go through as a primer what has actually happened so far with regard to open government and then we can start kind of diving into, so how does this all relate to performance and what not.

So this is a really interesting time I think to be talking about this topic. The last ten days in particular, you know, as many of you may know, last week was actually Sunshine Week, which was intended as a really – a national celebration and examination of transparency and open government and openness, and this should have been I think an amazing opportunity for the Obama Administration to really shine a spotlight on the amazing effort and tremendous amount of resource that they have put into this idea that government should be more participatory, transparent, collaborative.

It ended up being kind of a mixed week I think for the administration. There was a tremendous amount of celebration for what they've done. At the same time, I think the Associated Press came out with a report on FOIA, and the fact that despite commitments otherwise, responsiveness to FOIA requests actually have gone down in the past year. While FOIA requests have gone up, the number of times that agencies have actually responded to FOIA requests has gone down. And the Sunlight Foundation came out with testimony to Congress that looked at the degree to which the Obama Administration was accurately presenting data about the federal budget, and I think the number was – yeah, in 2009, there was $1.2 trillion in misreported data, right.

So I think this past week or ten days I think were a really interesting illustration of how much progress there has been so far and how far we have to go and how many road bumps there are along the way.

So, you know, as many of you know, on the President's first day in office, he put out a memorandum that declared that the federal government should be more participatory, transparent and collaborative.

And in the past two years, you know, I think we've seen a lot of movement in at least three important areas, right, so, you know, one is a lot of really interesting and important policies that have been put into place. So there was a memorandum to the Attorney General

very early on in the administration instructing the Attorney General to set out a policy with regard to FOIA that would be much more fear about the administration's predisposition to openness with regard to information requests, right.

There was an executive order very early on with regard to presidential records and reducing executive privileges to shield historical documents. There was an executive order early on with regard to Executive Branch employees receiving gifts from lobbyists and what not.

OMB and GSA clarified how agencies should use social media and online technologies to share data and collaborate with the public. And so there's been a lot of really interesting and important police movement forward on these issues.

At the same time, there have been a number of really important programs that have been put in place, right. USAspending.gov has – while that was created during the Bush Administration, has been I think amplified significantly in terms of how it's being used to be transparent about how the federal government is spending dollars. And, obviously, recovery.gov, as folks are aware, has been a remarkable example and experiment in how to do this kind of transparently making available data about what the federal government is doing. As Jeffrey was saying, data.gov has released more than 300,000 data sets, and the philosophy here really being that data can produce all sorts of unintended benefits within government and outside of government, and if we can just free up data and make it as user friendly as possible, incredible things can be done to create both a sense of accountability, but also to produce social goods.

The GSA created a Center For New Media and Citizen Engagement that is specifically aimed at working with federal agencies across the federal government in order to help them to use new media and new online tools to better work with and collaborate with the public.

And things like challenge.gov have been created, right, which are specifically an online platform and tool to encourage the federal government, federal agencies to go out there and say, we have a problem here, we want to work with the public on it, and we're going to give incentives for you to come in and work with us to solve these problems, so lots of really important programs going on.

And then I think most importantly, the Open Government Directive which came out a little less than a year into the first – the first year of the Obama Administration, that came out and literally required every single federal agency to create an open government plan, a document that would clearly declare what each agency was going to do to become more transparent, participatory and collaborative.

There have been more than 50 open government plans that have been created by federal agencies. They span the horizon in terms of what they include, what they talk about, what they focus on, but each of them is quite detailed in what the agency is committing to.

There have been a couple of evaluations thus far that have been conducted on open government plans. One was kind of a self-evaluation by the federal government that looked at each of the plans and compared it to the open government directive and said, to what extent for each plan is the agency actually living up to what the President committed.

And a second evaluation has been conducted by a coalition of transparency watchdogs under the umbrella of openthegovernment.org. And, again, what they did was, they went through each of these open government plans and compared them to what was in the open government directive. And I think what both of those evaluations found was that, at first there were quite a few gaps and holes between what the President asked the agencies to do and what agencies were committing to do, but over time, many of those gaps and holes have been filled. And by and large, with some exceptions, agencies are committing to do what the President has asked them to do.

But that kind of begs the question, right, is the President – is the administration asking agencies to do enough to actually become truly participatory, truly transparent, truly collaborative, and I think that's where a lot of the evaluation work and a lot of the scholarly work is going on right now, to say what's actually happening now within the federal government, and to what extent is it living up to what our expectations should be, and most of that work is in progress.

So, as I said earlier, I've been working with the IBM Center and America Speaks to read through all of these open government plans and try to get a sense for what they're saying.

And I guess this is still a work in progress, but a few things that we're seeing; first of all, you know, first and foremost, across the board, with almost no exceptions, federal agencies are doing tremendous work to experiment with online tools to engage the public, and this ranges from more traditional social media, blogs, and Facebook, and Twitter and that kind of stuff, but more importantly, gets into a lot – almost all of the agencies are experimenting with one form or another of some kind of crowd sourcing, or using Wikis to actually work with employees and stakeholders and the public to deal with difficult problems in different ways. And while it's still experimentation, it's making some really important steps forward.

The second thing we're seeing a lot of that I think is really interesting is the use of these online challenges, and I think this is something that's really been pushed out by GSA and OMB, the idea that if government can just offer incentives and focus the problem that they're trying to address, they can unleash a tremendous amount of wisdom and resources and entrepreneurialism to try to solve those problems, and that's a really interesting step forward that we're seeing across federal agencies.

In some, in I think a smaller number of agencies; we're seeing a really interesting, intentional effort to change the culture within agencies with regard to open

government. We're seeing uses of incentives for employees, we're seeing training programs, we're seeing efforts to try to figure out what are meaningful metrics to evaluate open government. On the negative side, what we're not seeing is any meaningful definition or standard for what should transparency and participation and collaboration actually look like, how do we define good open government, and how do we – how should we be measuring against that.

And I think in the question of what should be our standards and definitions, there are questions about what our goals should be, and it comes – I think gets into the conversation that we're going to have about performance, why do we care about open government, and given the things that we care about, what should we really be measuring agencies about with regard to, you know, where are they trying to go, what are they doing.

And the federal government, the Open Government Initiative, has not provided a lot of guidance to agencies to help them understand where they should be going with open government. And so we're seeing kind of open government plans all over the place, and I think if I have any big concern, it's this concern about a lack of standards. The last I guess two things I'd say is, we're seeing I think an over emphasis on online tools with regard to open government. Online tools are tremendously powerful resources that can help us make data available, bring people in, but there are incredible shortcomings to what technology can do. And I think what we're seeing across federal agencies is being caught up I think in the excitement about what's possible and not looking at what we already know about what face to face participation and other more traditional mediation tools can do to help work with stakeholders and the public to generate real good results.

And I guess the last thing I'd say is, we're not seeing I think across these open government plans a lot of genuine opportunities for people to really impact some of the most important decisions that people care the most about.

And I think there was a question to Jeffrey earlier today about the fact that the public doesn't really know what the federal government is up to. And I think the answer is not just to market better, but I think the solution has to be reaching out to and engaging with the public in the areas people care the most about so that people feel a sense of trust and a sense of understanding with what government is trying to achieve. And we're not seeing a lot of I think meaningful efforts to really reach out to and work with the public in the places that people care the most about, and I think that is the source of a lot of the stress that's out there. So anyway, so that's just an opening.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Okay, thank you. Following up on that, we've got the broad vision of improving performance, reengineering everything, nothing is off the table, I'd love your take on things, Kathryn.

MS. NEWCOMER: Okay. So where is Obama's Performance Improvement Agenda? I would say that the best way to think of that is like the Where's Waldo. Remember Where's Waldo, the children's game, is that you have to look really carefully because Waldo is hiding here or there and it's hard to find him, yet, you know, he'll pop up everywhere – every once in a while, and I think that's the way it is in terms of this isn't like some orchestrated band in a parade in step coming down the street, but a little bit here, a little bit there, and you have to look really carefully.

So I'm going to just talk a little bit about what is the, you know, the Performance Improvement Agenda in terms of looking into the agencies. And I would say that it's interesting that – didn't mention this morning, but the high priority goals that have been set across government are what really most of us think about, most of us and the people within the agencies, think about that is the Performance Improvement Agenda.

And it also – it's a set of criteria that has been sent forth very transparently by which to evaluate in the end how well the administration does. But definitions matter, and so,

you know, what does performance and performance improvement mean? It could mean a lot of different things, yet I don't, you know, we heard about transparency, the initiatives in IT, reorganization, there's a lot of ways to get at improvement.

I'm going to talk more about management and how the federal agencies are managing and how they perceive what the signals they're getting from the Obama Administration via the Office of Management and Budget about this.

So looking in the agencies, what do we see? I think, if you ask, and I have been asking actually, a lot of folks will say what is the new Performance Management Agenda, and the answer is, it's not PART anymore, that is, PART's gone, that's the key thing that you hear, that is, the Program Assessment Rating Tool that was used by OMB for five years during the Bush Administration to assess and give points to programs. And, in fact, that was a sense of relief, it's like, whew, it's not that, okay, so what is it?

Well, there is a set of high priority goals that the secretaries and administrators were asked to identify very early on, and to set out goals that are to be tracked and reported on on a quarterly basis, and this is now part of the GPRA Modernization Act, which Obama signed on January 4th, that is that there would be this tracking, and that – supposed to be coming out on performance.gov, which is supposed to be a portal in which the public can provide new transparency to look at achievement of these goals.

The achievement of those goals has been sort of the key thing which some people in the agencies have seen, although I might point out that it's interesting that I hear repeatedly people say, oh, those are those OMB goals, which it points out -- the interesting point here is that OMB, I believe, really intended the agencies to feel invested and achievement of the goals because they're their goals to achieve, not OMB's goals to achieve, yet it's very, very difficult. The interesting dance between OMB and the agencies in terms of performance and management is very interesting, and I'll get back to that. But in terms of how well are we

doing, it's like we started out in the sunshine, and all of a sudden the rains came, and the rains being that budget cuts, you know, the signals were, we're going to devote more money to evaluation, to really get more evidence about what works and so on, but now there's the cutting, the budget cutting and wondering if, in fact, as is usually the case, that evaluation is one of the first to take hits.

One of the things that, early on, Zients and other spokespersons for the administration said was, we want to get away from that compliance, burden mentality about looking at performance. That was something that was apparent particularly with the PART process and a lot of reporting with both the government Performance and Results Act, and then with a PART assessment that meant there's a lot of feeling within the agencies that, you know, more reporting burden and not so much learning, but just feed the beast with the data.

And right out of the gate, the Obama Administration officials at OMB said, we don't want to do that, we want to get rid of that mentality, it needs to be about using data, not just reporting for the sake of reporting. It's really had to do, it's very, very difficult to do, and now we have some reporting burden mentality about those data on the high priority goals.

So going forward, I think that there's a lot of interesting linkages between the transparency issues and performance management issues. First, I think it'll be very interesting to see what happens with the high priority goals.

I immediately thought, wow, the republicans got a gift, that when the next election comes up, they get to make the score card, what percent of the goals were made. So that was really – I mean actually I – I think that that was a very nice risk taking kind of thing to do, to say we're going to do this, we're going to get, I think it's 50,000 homeless vets off the streets, we're going to do, you know, a variety of important and worthy goals, some of which demand cross-agency collaboration. And for those of you inside the beltway, you know, oh my gosh, that is really getting that heavy ball up the hill there.

Recognizing that achievement of those goals does not necessarily, though, translate into changes in the way agencies are going to do business, that is, that doesn't necessarily mean that goal setting and tracking how well we're doing necessarily has any kind of causal link to changes in the way that programs are managed.

I think incentivizing management improvement is extremely tricky, and one of the trickiest things is literally not only incentivizing, but getting -- institutionalizing the interpretation of data.

OMB, or excuse me, GAO has done – has provided lots of very interesting reports about management and particularly the government Performance and Results Act and how collecting data has translated into changing and improving government.

And one of the reports was, government performance, lessons learned for the next administration on using performance information to improve results. And it's clear when you hear, and you have heard Shelley Metzenbaum, I think she read this report, and I think that she's very much aware that you need to – we want to see managers and executives using data to inform decision-making, who can argue that?

One of the interesting – not so, you know, highlighted findings, but one of the things I thought was very interesting in the report, that GAO had actually, about every four years, had conducted huge surveys across the government of government managers and asked them, are you using the data, you know, what are the challenges, what are the incentives and so on. Well, tucked away in this report was that, you know what, the folks, the managers in the agencies actually need training and need to know how to actually use those data.

It's not something that, no matter how brilliant our graduates are, there are MPA's and MPP's that go out there, but it's not necessarily something that even the most well trained people are going to figure out how to do. And so this issue of, but how do you get – how

do you make that transition, you have the data, presumably, at your fingertips, I'm not so sure how timely data are to inform management, but how do you make that transition?

By the way, to be fair, Jerry also said that the budget examiners at OMB need to be better trained to how to interpret the data, as well, it wasn't just the management.

I think there's some double edged swords going on here in terms of the OMB and agency dance going on about performance improvement, as I mentioned. So on the one hand, OMB has the clout. We all know that budget offices have the clout within agencies, and OMB particularly does vis-à-vis the agencies. But what's interesting is, both – well, Zients particularly, and Shelley Metzenbaum, his deputy, talk about the fact that OMB wants to be the coach and not the policeman in terms of this, and that's great, but that's kind of hard to pull out. How do you move that way?

They have a great pulpit, and Shelley Metzenbaum is – she's one of those sort of Waldos out there that's going around and providing, you know, encouragement. It's too bad we don't have – we couldn't sort of replicate her and have like three dozen Shelley Metzenbaums going around and doing that, because she doesn't have – she only has I think 48 hours in her day.

OMB is the panel for all these different systems, you know, IT, human resources, HR systems, the contracting out. They are at that point, and the only folks that could be pressing the buttons to figure out how do we get, you know, less redundancy, less, how should I say, better coordination among these, but this is really, really difficult, and there's a lot on the plate of OMB going on right now. OMB's commitment to transparency is great, and they've been making a lot of progress, but, again, there's a lot of burden. And just for example, the performance.gov portal is still not out, you know. They said it – I think it was going to be July, and it was going to be November, and I'm not sure what the latest was on that. These are high promises, relatedly, high promises at that dashboard.

So say you have the IT dashboard, dashboards in which you can look at high level measures. Again, people in the agencies that have lots of other things to do actually are behind getting the information and clarifying that the data are reliable and credible and meaningful and timely. This is a lot of burden.

One of the other things that Zients and Shelley Metzenbaum have been talking about is establishing problem solving networks that will work in coordination with PIC. That's the – PIC is the Counsel of Performance Improvement Officers in the agencies. And I mean who can argue? That's great, is that we need more cross agency collaboration in terms of talking about, you know, how we move forward.

It's not clear that that's been happening. In fact, I've been talking to folks, executives, I mean – and I'm not talking about nines, (?) I'm talking about talking to SESers and agencies about performance improvement efforts and what's going on with the PIC. And it's amazing how many people don't know who their PIO is, which I find sort of interesting, other than a couple of ones that I see someone in the office here, in the room, that there's a few agencies that have had very long standing performance improvement officers, but there's a little bit of confusion about that, and we have a few, not supposingly, a few secretaries who aren't interested in data and have made that very clear to folks in the agency, and so there's, you know, cross signals.

The reduction of reporting, and I would just like to say, if anybody at OMB would listen, is that there's been talk about the need to what I would call sort of weed the garden of way too many performance measures, and that is going on in a few places, but I would like to say, let's do, you know, more of that, please. Again, since OMB has a playing coach, that would be a great theme to stress.

You know, I mentioned this notion about how do we get managers and executives, both the politicals and the career execs, to develop more habits and more comfort

with utilizing data and figuring out how to interpret and use data. I think that that's something that I would particularly like to leave. Clint Brass, who I see is in the audience, recently authored a wonderful CRS report, it's actually called a memo, but sort of a thick memo, and he said a lot of good things, very interesting, provocative things about what's going on with the current performance management agenda.

But a couple of things I just want to point out that I thought were particularly insightful and leave us with something to think about, one is that Congress needs to also develop more skills in figuring out how to interpret the evidence or the data, and maybe to develop their own expertise, more about asking questions, about how do you interpret data.

As a program evaluation professional, I cringe when I hear people saying, oh, well, we have a study that shows whether a program works or doesn't work. It's very, very difficult, I would say perhaps even impossible, to take one study that's going to ever demonstrate whether a program does or doesn't work, and usually what's more likely is, you have multiple studies with different kinds of conflicting kinds of evidence on what works and what doesn't.

And so what I thought was interesting about the CRS recommendation here was that, also Congress needs to ask the more sort of nuance questions about rate. You know, how do we know that this evidence is good? And then I want to end with my favorite part of – sentence from the CRS report, which was – which Clint was talking about the fact that I alluded to earlier about this reporting compliance mentality, you know, it was PART, now it's the data on the high priority goals, and how do we get beyond sort of – pass the data on to what is called institutionalizing imagination, institutionalizing imagination on the part of – within the agencies of how they interpret and use data.

How do you get to moving from pushing it on and reporting the data to actually making sense and interpreting data, which, again, I would suggest is not easy on the – you don't have

sort of black and white kinds of interpretations, what any kind of data are going to tell you, which is why it's not so easy. If it was easy, everybody would be doing a great job at it, which suggests, you know, we aren't.

And if there's anything really cool that I would love to see result from the – a performance agenda during this administration, it would be to figure out how to break out of the compliance mentality and to institutionalize and promote imagination and creativity. There are, like Waldo, like are some little points where that is happening across government, like the Safety Council at DOT, talking to people that have been very instrumental in organizing that, or people that say we don't know who the PIO is, but we're having regular meetings with our Safety Council and promoting some very interesting initiatives within the Department of Transportation that definitely deal with performance, it's just not sort of inside the boundaries of the official, you know, kit and so on. So that goes out there, but difficult to see right off the bat.

MR. FRIEDMAN: All right, thank you, Kathryn. So we have some data, perhaps too much data, and we have some transparency, perhaps not quite enough transparency, which sort of seems to be a very interesting message where we should have more of some stuff and less of some other stuff, but at least lesson the burden. So can we walk through the relationship now between transparency and performance? There are a couple of stories that I think one could tell, but I'd love to hear where you think this link is easily made and where you think the case is harder to make.

MR. GOLDMAN: Well, let me just start off with a few of the most obvious places where there is a strong and important link. And, you know, when Jeffrey Zients was speaking earlier about this government reorganization that is starting to take place, you know, he mentioned the obvious, which is that it's going to be very, very hard to do.

And I think part of the response that at least some folks would have to how you try to do it more effectively is to do it in a more participatory way, right, that one of the reasons

why we can and should care about open government is that by involving employees, by involving stakeholders more in trying to solve these difficult problems and work through reorganizations, there's a lot of data out there to suggest that you can be much more successful at doing it, right.

And so, you know, he referenced this notion that we can do something similar to the Save Awards, which is kind of open up online platforms for lots of ideas from employees and others about the reorganization process. I think, you know, something that certainly America Speaks has been very interested in is how might we use large scale reorganization processes, participatory reorganization processes that have taken place quite a bit outside of government in order to involve stakeholders and employees in this process of thinking through how do we change how we work and all of that. So I think that's obviously one important link as we're thinking about this reorganization process.

I think, you know, on a related front, a lot of this work that Jeffrey referenced and that I think folks are aware of with regard to crowd sourcing difficult problems that agencies are facing, you know, when agencies are able to make data available to a broader set of employees, agencies, stakeholders and the public, it's possible to bring more resources and wisdom and knowledge and energy to bear to solve problems and to improve the ability of government to address our highest needs.

And so it seems to me that the second most important, you know, link is the extent to which we are able to become – create a more open government I think hopefully will improve government's ability to actually solve problems, because it won't only be – the problems that they're facing will not only be in the hands of the small number of federal managers who we're able to put on the federal payroll, we're able to open it up and bring others into the mix, right, and so at least to start it off, those would be two I think important examples.

MS. NEWCOMER: Relatedly, I agree that getting involvement from – throughout an agency is extremely important in any kind of initiative. And I think that might have been, I would suggest, a little bit of a problem with the high priority goals. There was not involvement throughout organizations on that, and there was actually a feeling within the agencies that there was a very great lack of transparency, and that, in fact, in some instances, and I don't want to generalize all agencies, but there was a feeling that there was not necessarily a broad engagement of the career executives with political executives in identifying what the high priority goals were.

And I get it, I mean, you know, when you have a new administration and you have political appointees, there's not going to be an easy melding of views, and, you know, a natural distrust, but that's kind of – given that there was going to be so much invested and so much transparency after the fact about what these goals were, that was kind of too bad. It seems to be that – I guess if I was going in to be secretary of XYZ, I would want to get the best, brightest career people in the organization, into the room, and not let them out of the room until we had really talked through the implications of what these goals were going to be, and getting people down on the line, getting the park rangers in the room with us if it was Park Service or whatever, to make sure that these were realistic.

Because these really are key drivers in the Performance Management Initiative here, is that – that's what people are going to be looking at. We'll say did you get, you know, what proportion of those, what is it, 115, whatever, goals – it's going to be percentage, you know it's going to be, well, 15 percent were made, you know, 85 – there's going to be a lot on that, and I thought, wow, that would have been great to have a lot more involvement from throughout.

MR. GOLDMAN: And just I think – I mean the other area which -- I think it's much harder to draw the link from the data perspective, and I think it would be interesting to

know what folks think about this, but, you know, in part of how this session was framed initially, why we're talking about these issues, a statistic was read I think in the opening about the number of people who don't trust government, right, and the fact that that is a problem, right. And I think there's an interesting question to be discussed about the link between the degree to which the public trusts government and trusts federal agencies to be doing different kinds of things, and what's the link between that and the ability of federal agencies to perform well, and to what extent do we need to -- as we're thinking about government performance, do we also need to be thinking about increasing public trust and buy-in into what government is doing.

And, you know, I think the other obvious link between open government and performance is that connection, and what are the things that we can do to make government more open and participatory in a way that rebuilds public trust in what government does, which hopefully then has positive effects with regard to reducing some road blocks, increasing support for funding, all sorts of other kinds of things.

MS. NEWCOMER: You know, kind of related to that, I was thinking about the – actually the stimulus, and recovery.gov has really done a fantastic job, really, they have. However, I think – I always use my brother in Nebraska as the acid test about what people outside the beltway think. And, you know, most of the folks outside the beltway probably remember when the Colbert Report was making fun of the fact that there was some non-existent 46th district in Arizona or whatever that was credited with having some jobs created right at the very beginning of – following tracking the recovery.gov.

So a lot of Americans are going to remember, you know, oh yeah, they got the districts wrong, they couldn't even figure out how many, you know, districts there were in Arizona to put on the web site and so on.

So that was at the very beginning literally, during the first few weeks, but those kind of little stories, those, you know, I remember actually, I watched Colbert, it was – they had

a picture of Brad Pitt in his Achilles outfit being, you know, the new representative of that district in Arizona, I remember that.

Do any of you remember the last few reports and the accuracy levels? Can anybody tell us what the most recent accuracy is? I know my brother in Nebraska doesn't, but he can certainly remember that they created some 46th district in Arizona or whatever, you know, just a numerical kind of thing, but unfortunately, those negative kinds of questions that are negative memories in terms of the transparency have much longer shelf lives than positive news. Positive news doesn't even make it, you know. So we actually have done a wonderful job. I don't know how many Americans know that. That was huge, you know, the frequency of reporting on the stimulus.

MR. FRIEDMAN: I think the accountability also means the occasional delightful got you moment.

MS. NEWCOMER: Yeah.

MR. FRIEDMAN: But I want to follow up on this question of transparency driving a participatory model and looking inside the agency perspective. So Jeffrey talked about engaging industry stakeholders, and I'd love your perspective on how that is working, and also expanding out to other models of stakeholders, whether it is some of the more political public models or whether it is advocacy groups, and even dare I say on the Hill, what kind of participatory model can be derived – can drive performance.

MS. NEWCOMER: Well, I was just thinking about, two weeks ago we had a forum at our school, I think it was called Disasters: The Gap Between Citizen Expectations and Responders Capabilities, and we had folks from FEMA there and the Red Cross and the private sector talking about the need on going forward, better institutionalization of ties between the private sector and the public sector in participating in after disaster respondent. And one of the interesting questions our students had was, well, so there's this office in FEMA now called the

Private Sector Engagement Office or something to that effect, and you may have seen that they had somebody I think from Wal-Mart come in and literally, you know, work there for six months, and they're trying to get more – better engagement.

And I thought that, you know, it's interesting, the question was, well, how do you choose which of the private sector, and then are you going to – will there be accusations that there's favoritism, because the notion of, you know, the foxes getting into the chicken coop kind of mentality, which is a very – again, my brother out in Nebraska would say, wait a second, you know, government and industry together, what's industry going to get out of that, you know, there must be a hidden agenda and so on.

So it's interesting, because I think we need it, we definitely need to have the private sector involvement, particularly in dealing with catastrophes and after events and so on, but it's difficult to do. And I kind of was thinking, since it's a democratic administration involving business, actually it's probably easier, because if it was republican administration and you had the more active involvement of the private sector, then the other side would be more quick to criticize. But there's a lot of areas beyond this which you do need private sector involvement, but given our sort of anti-government and pro private sector political culture, that's hard to pull off.

MR. GOLDMAN: I guess I would only add two things; one is that, you know, I think there are fields of practice out there that have been working for decades on how to think about new and better mechanisms for engaging and working with stakeholders and mediating input processes in a way that is fair and equitable and all of that.

And I think there are certain agencies within the federal government that have done a really good job at taking advantage of those areas of expertise, especially in the environmental realms. It's much less so I think among many of the federal agencies.

And so in the way that there is – the Udall Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution, which essentially serves as a consultant and mediator for the environmental agencies in bringing in stakeholders to deal with tough disputes, it would be nice to see similar kinds of bodies that are available as resources for other agencies across the government to support them in thinking about how to, you know, how to use the best practices that are out there to meaningfully work with and engage stakeholders.

The other thing I just wanted to note is, some folks may be aware that OMB and GSA have kind of floated this idea of creating something they're calling – a name that they haven't agreed on, but right now what they're calling Expert Net, and the idea, as I understand it, is that, you know, they'd like to pilot in the next several months an online network of experts from many, many different disciplines that, on a regular basis, could be consulted with by federal agencies, when a certain question or problem comes up, that could be put out to this network, experts could respond, and then other experts could weigh in on those responses.

And it's an interesting – I don't know, it's certainly not the be all and end all of consultation, but it's an interesting, creative way to think about what are institutional mechanisms that could be created by which agencies could regularly reach out to others for consultation and advice.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Thank you. So I think now we'd like to open it up to you for your questions and comments. There are people coming around with microphones, and as always, if you could identify yourself and your organization.

MR. SHIFRISS: Hi, Adam Shifriss, former congressional staffer. Great comments, great discussion. I think you just barely touched on, you know, the elephant in the room in terms of trusting government, and a few years ago it was the donkey in the room, and that's the partisanship, right.

So the discussion has been so inside the beltway, even when you're talking about public trust in government with specific program metrics and things like that. When you get out to Middle America, people don't even know what those things are. And it's so hard to conceive that putting out metrics or particular programs or agencies or anything like that will ever do anything, when the person who's on the local news is equivocating the stimulus with the TARP or accusing the government of, you know, wire-tapping, whichever party is in charge, so if you could just comment.

MR. GOLDMAN: Yeah, I mean I think that's clearly the case. And I guess my response and the way that America Speaks has been kind of addressing this issue is that the way that we're going to rebuild trust and the way that we're going to address these issues of partisanship and polarization, all of that, is truly to deeply engage the public and create mechanisms by which government can be a supporter and convener of the public in learning about issues, deliberating about issues, and really wrestling with them, with their fellow citizen, right.

This past summer, we organized a national discussion on the federal budget deficit, obviously not an easy, non-controversial issue to come together around, and we brought several thousand citizens demographically representative together across 57 or so sites around the country simultaneously linked by video, and, you know, at any given table in any of these sites around the country, we had somebody from Move On sitting down with somebody from the Tea Party, and, you know, there was a big question about, at this point in our history, what's going to happen when you do that, you know, are there going to be fights that are going to break out, are there going to be protests, you know, whatever, and, you know, what we found was that, over the course of literally a seven and a half hour program, people stayed from across the country, all walks of life, and they, you know, if I'm a liberal, I sat down and I saw somebody across the table with an NRA t-shirt, and I may have had an initial instinct to get up

and, you know, walk away, but they stuck with it, and over the course of this process, they dramatically increased their understanding about these issues, they dramatically increased their trust in this process and actually found common ground and found incredible areas of agreement about what we could do to actually reduce the budget deficit.

And for me, it was a really interesting demonstration of what's possible if you create the right kind of space for the public to come together. And it wouldn't be easy to do, but for me, the way we're going to deal with those kinds of problems is if we really get out there and create venues to engage the public, because that's going to increase their understanding of what government is actually doing, what government is up against, and what other people are talking about and complaining about with regard to, you know, their points of view, and I think that's how we create a truly open and participatory government and how we get to the root of the problems we're facing.

MS. NEWCOMER: Well, as I mentioned, I think that what's going to happen is that, what's easy to translate in a short story or in the newspaper or online or on the nightly news is, what proportion of these goals did the administration achieve, which, as I said, I think is risky, and it will be a summary fashion of, well, so that's what they did, so they got only 30 percent done.

These were policy goals, they weren't management goals, and again, that's probably too many realms. I think – I'm not even optimistic that anybody outside the beltway is really going to understand management within the federal government.

But movement to achieve policy goals or not is understandable. And I think there's going to be – when you start having targets with performance data and targets, you end up making it a win/lose scenario, that's the deal. Whenever you put, you know, the numbers out there, and so that's what you're going to have, you're going to have a score card, and that's pretty much I think what the public is going to hear and not understand as much behind it.

MR. FRIEDMAN: So we have a question here?

MR. SHETLEY: Thanks very much, Pete Shetley, Brookings. I have the impression you all are sort of reinventing the wheel, and here's what I mean. CHIPRA, Congess passed it, federal agencies did exactly what we're doing here. How do we do all this? Then comes Al Gore's reinvention of government. The speech he gave in this room was – many words, examples, anecdotes were exactly the same ones Jeff used this morning. Change the dates, the two speeches were exactly the same.

Then came PART under President Bush. Some of the suggestions you folks made were tried back then in this third, now fourth effort to reform. Open up the process, make it wide open, outside suggestions. I was closely involved in the State Department reinvention effort, and it failed. Despite all – we did all the things you folks recommended, wide outside participation, ideas from – why did it fail? Why did so many other agency's reinvention effort in the '90's fail?

Let me give you one suggestion, many of the top leaders, I'm talking about secretaries, cabinet members, aren't all that interested in institutional reform, they want to leave a legacy of policy achievements.

When the crunch was on, Mr. Secretary, here are a bunch of suggestions for reforming the State Department, what happened? He had a small group of people, half a dozen, every one of them a political appointee, every one, no career person made it into that small group, and they –don't do it, don't let the bureaucracy box you in, and that ended it. Look around at senior cabinet people all over town, many of them surround themselves with politicos, and this outside – never gets up there.

A second key element is the people that work in Public Affairs never move up to the top. If you're a military person, you're never going to make general. FSO, you're never

going to make ambassador. So these people never make it to the top, and the word never gets out.

MR. FRIEDMAN: There's nothing new under this one.

MR. GOLDMAN: Well, I think the question is what is the kind of unfinished agenda of those past reforms, right, and what needs to be taken forward, and I certainly, by no means, am – I think there are a lot of people in the room with far deeper experience than I. And I'd actually give the microphone – Carolyn Lukensmeyer is right behind you, who is deeply involved with some of the reinventing of government.

And with regard to the openness piece, I'm wondering, Carolyn, if you would want to talk about kind of what is that next step from the reinventing government now to the openness agenda and how that relates to performance.

MS. LUKENSMEYER: Sure.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Not to put you on the spot.

MS. LUKENSMEYER: So I want to pick up on what you said in terms of a fundamental piece that Kathy already put out there. I came from a background of working in state government, came into the federal government in the Clinton/Gore Administration, and if I were going to pick the single factor that is most dysfunctional and different on the federal level than the state level, I would pick exactly what you two highlighted, which is the built in institutional gap between political appointees and career officers.

This, of course, is always a problem, and it's our own inside the institution trust issue. By definition, if I care more about policy, I know I'm only going to be here a couple of years, I have no idea who these people are, so how in God's name am I going to know which six or eight of them to pull in to help me pick the high priorities which my agency will then be evaluated on in the public, okay.

I think that is an interestingly practice and scholarly challenge that has never been taken on deeply enough either in the academy or in the various policy think tanks in this city. And in terms of the fundamental thing that keeps deep management reform from occurring because we recycle and work our past the same issue time and time again, if I had to pick out the highest single leverage point, that's the one I would pick.

Where I would differ with you in terms of, and I was deeply involved with John Kamensky in terms of the Gore reinvention, and it had its successes and it had its failure, but there was – what is really different this time around, I don't know that it will make anymore difference in the long run, but it is really different.

We are in a completely different era in terms of information technology. And I think both speakers have acknowledged both some things that the Obama Administration has done that are extraordinary. The level of experimentation in terms of data sets and transparency is really out there and it's setting a worldwide standard.

The dilemma is that transparency and data sets without matching meaning making capacities doesn't really move the ball forward either inside the beltway or outside the beltway, so I think that's the next challenge area in terms of where do we go next on what is completely different than previously. The last area I would say in the trust issue around the gap in this country between where the public is and where we are as institutional leaders, whether that's political leaders or management leaders, we all have to be very, very, what do I want to – what's the word even, just look at much more deeply and much more systemically.

We are the only mature democracy on the face of the earth in which the two major political parties still actually invest more energy in how to either oppress voting or ensure that only those voters who will vote the way I want them to vote come out to the polls. As long as that's true and we're sitting somewhere around 50 percent of actual participation in this

election of our electoral leaders, how on earth can we imagine that trust in government will shift once we're in the governing side?

So more forums have to be, in my opinion, looked at, where we deal with the dysfunction in electoral politics at the same time we're dealing with the inadequacies in governing. Thank you.

MR. GOLDMAN: We'll keep that in mind for next year and the hard problems that we'll solve.

MS. NEWCOMER: Could I just –

MR. FRIEDMAN: Please.

MS. NEWCOMER: -- could I just add that we have had a series of reforms that have, you know, as you mentioned, under – actually going back to Carter and Ford, management by objective, there have been a series of attempts by administrations to change the way the federal government is managed.

What I would say is different. I know that some of the – from the outside, it looks like we're doing the same things, we have a very different environment now than we did in the '70's or the '80's or the '90's, and that is that we do have a federal work force that is much more used to talking about how do we know whether this program is effective, what kind of performance targets are reasonable.

One thing that the PART process under the Bush Administration did was really raise the dialogue and the kinds of really good hard questions that federal managers are raising. It's different, and it's clearly facilitated by information technology. We wouldn't have all these data if we didn't have the facility to collect them.

So what's different now is that, yeah, we still are talking about, you know, how do we kind of improve management, and, you know, use ideas from the front line, that's similar, but the capabilities we have, the data we have, and the kinds of really good questions that

managers are raising. For example, program logic models are analytic frameworks to help you analyze how programs are supposed to work and what the intended outputs and outcomes are. I've been training people how to use those for probably 25 years. Up to even ten years ago, I would say – how many people have heard of a program logic model to demonstrate what your program is doing, and nobody raised their hand.

Now I can't go anywhere where people go, yeah, we do understand, we get it, we understand how, you know, we're trying to figure out what would be the short term outcomes and longer term outcomes. So the sophistication of the dialogue is – that's different.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Questions here?

MR. GOLDMAN: I just wanted to get the references for the GAO and the CRS reports.

MS. NEWCOMER: Well, there's lots of good GAO reports, but this one, I'll show you afterwards. The CRS report, I know – the only way that I've heard you can get it is by going to John Kamensky's blog at the IBM web site for the Center For the Business of Government, and then it's very complex, but you have to then – excuse me?

MR. FRIEDMAN: We might be able to post a link on the events web site, as well.

MS. NEWCOMER: I don't even know if you can, but you have download some software, and then to be able to get that. By the way, I misspoke, it was Target, not Wal-Mart. I don't know if you care, but when I was talking earlier about the guy that was embedded, the woman that was embedded over at FEMA, anyway, a big difference, and so I thought to myself, I have to correct myself.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Yes, on the aisle.

MS. BAUM: Hi, Amber Baum, I'm at the National Science Foundation. I have two questions for Doctor Newcomer. First is, at NSF, I am in the Performance Team in the Budget Division, and this gets weirder and weirder, because I see less and less connection

between the two, performance budgeting seems to be dying, and the perfect example is the priority goals.

We have one priority goal, which is kind of great, but it covers, obviously, a small part of our budget, and if this is the trend, as you say, you want to see fewer goals, GAO would like to see fewer goals, the Task Force, the Budget Task Force last week wants to see fewer goals, so how can we reconcile those two? That's one question, is performance budgeting over? The second is, everybody also would like to see the end of this compliance mentality, and we're going to hear more about that later from Doctor Metzenbaum, and she'll present her ideas for how to do that, which you mentioned about useful, useful, useful will be one.

So I'm curious on your take on a few of those, and the two I can think of are, you know, the recent Center For American Progress sort of checklist approach that Senator Warner spoke at. And Senator Warner also spoke about how he sort of intends Gitmo, or whatever we'll be calling it, to serve that same role.

He wants to have Gitmo really involve Congress, and he basically wants programs to stand up and volunteer to be cut if they're not working. What do you think will be the future of those? Do you think there are any other ways that might work if – and anything else?

MS. NEWCOMER: So I actually didn't know there was performance based budgeting that had been going on, so that's kind of a surprise to me. But during the Bush Administration, they talked about performance budget integration, that is, that there was supposed to be more integration. I hate to say it, but I would say it wasn't really performance based budgeting then, I think that performance based budgeting is a dream, performance informed budgeting. But what's interesting is, that gets back to – one of the first things I said was that Zients and others at OMB have been saying that they're going to be a coach and not a policeman. In other words, they were saying that we're not going to – we want you to use data,

but the question is: are we using data to make budget priorities. I don't think that is clear. And I'm –

MS. BAUM: There's no guidance –

MS. NEWCOMER: What?

MS. BAUM: -- there's no guidance that that's what they want to see.

MS. NEWCOMER: That what?

MS. BAUM: That they want to see, you know, the performance measures used in budgeting decisions, you know, and Gitmo says the same thing, so I hear the conflicting messages, too.

MS. NEWCOMER: Well, yeah, but I'm not sure if that's really happening, I mean I don't see. One of the questions I have about the high priorities goals is how they do relate to budgetary, you know, priorities, as well as how do they relate to GPRA, that's the Government Performance and Results Act, strategic goals. And in some agencies, there's more alignment, and then in other agencies, there is not. And I don't know, I mean I don't know how you're going to see the – how the achievement or not, the high priority goals, how that's going to be linked to the budget, because it's not – that's not clear to me.

So I think that what you are expressing is probably fairly government-wide, there's a lot of kind of questions about how that's going to work. Because on the one hand, okay, emphasis on a high priority goal; on the other hand, we have a lot of budget cutting and volunteering for, you know, programs that need to be cut, and finding out what programs don't work and so on, that's kind of scary to a lot of people, and, to me, it's not scary personally, but it raises – to me, the issue is that – it makes it sound like it's going to be easy, it's like black and white, but we're going to know what programs work and what don't, and I don't think that that is easy at all.

So I don't know, I think that there is a lot, like there always is, a kind of uncertainty. I always call it sort of floating anxiety for program managers, whether or not the performance data can be used against them in the budgetary process, and that – I think that is not anything new under the sun, and that's continuing.

MR. FRIEDMAN: I think we have time for one or two more quick questions, if there are some out there. If not, I have a full page of them, but in the back. A panel like this, you've got to take advantage.

SPEAKER: What can be done to compel contractors and grantees to share more information about the results of their efforts that would improve the overall field?

MR. FRIEDMAN: Contract side?

MS. NEWCOMER: You know, that's a really good question. One of the things the GAO surveys of managers over time, the lowest proportion of federal managers that said that they're using data was on to help us do a better job with contracts, that was pretty consistent.

But in terms – if they said, do you use performance data to, you know, manage your program, help you write budgets, blah, blah, blah, and then down the list, the list was on budget.

We hear performance based budgeting a lot, but I'm not so sure we've done a very good job of that, and I'm very excited, I hope, that there's going to be sort of a very closer look given to contracting. I think that from somebody who's been watching this for over 25 years, I've been sort of distraught at the non-strategic way that we've gone about contracting out our government. Rather than strategically thinking within organizations what's best to contract out, a lot of it has gone through just – because literally, starting with huge cuts of employees, it really started in the Clinton Administration, if you recall, that was the – well, I think one of the most obvious "achievements" of MPR, was getting rid of over 250,000 federal

employees, but now we have many more than those and contractors that are doing the same kind of work, but it's not in any kind of systemic way, and so we're sort of at a hodgepodge in terms of what we have contracting out in a very convoluted way in which contractors are looking over the contracting and so on.

So that is a key piece of how government performs that clearly needs a lot more attention. It's not covered by the high priority goals for that process at all, by the way.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Joe, do you have thoughts on the transparency side of things?

MR. GOLDMAN: No, I don't think so.

MR. FRIEDMAN: So I wonder if we can sort of tie up some final thoughts here on the – in two minutes on getting back to this question of the importance of transparency and participation in performance. Final thoughts?

MR. GOLDMAN: You know, I mean I think we've covered the gamut of some of the issues. You know, I think there's obviously – while there's been a lot that's been tried in the past, there's a lot of experimentation going on right now and a lot of I think suppositions about what will be effective, what won't be effective and what will actually produce results.

And I guess the only other thing I'd add here – and across town right now, there is an R&D conference on open government that is taking place, and I think the other piece of all of this is, to what extent and how are we actually evaluating these experiments in transparency and participation with regard to the results that they're actually producing and the benefits that they're producing, and how are we starting to measure the cost benefit of the open government directive.

And I think that's the other piece that we need to be focused on as a community, is both helping government understand what else it can do, but more importantly, helping government understand how effective it's being and what that's producing.

MR. FRIEDMAN: Final thoughts, Kathryn, on this?

MS. NEWCOMER: Well, my final two cents is that I would love to see more integration between our evaluation efforts within agencies and performance reporting efforts, that is, to figure out how we can better institutionalize how we assess what we're doing, how well we're doing with an evaluation mentality and some actual staff, for example, maybe even offices that actually would look at how, you know, more systematic evaluations of programs and how we can merge.

Literally in agencies, they're the performance reporting people over in that office, typically in the budget office, and then there's an evaluation office somewhere else, and never between shall meet.

And there is not the synergies that could be derived from figuring out how can we mine the data we're getting in a more systematic way to actually learn about how well we're doing.

MR. FRIEDMAN: All right. Well, I hope you'll join me in thanking Kathryn and Joe for joining us today. Thank you.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012