

# U.S. Sen. Johnson: Applauds House passage of Presidential Transition Enhancement Act

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**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, applauded passage of the *Presidential Transition Enhancement Act of 2019* in the U.S. House of Representatives. This bipartisan legislation that Chairman Johnson and Sen. Carper (D-Del.) introduced fixes issues that arose during the Obama-Trump presidential transition and codifies current ethics practices of presidential transition teams.

**“Regardless of what party wins an election and takes the White House, it is imperative that presidential candidates’ transition teams have full confidence in the services provided by federal agencies and that the transition of power is as smooth as possible,”** said Sen. Johnson. **“Handing over the keys to the entire \$4.45 trillion federal government is a colossal undertaking. This legislation makes important improvements to streamline the transition process.”**

Trump for America, Inc. (TFA) was the organization designated to carry out pre-election and post-election transition activities for then-candidate Donald J. Trump. In December 2017, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee received an allegation from TFA that GSA had unlawfully disclosed its privileged communications. Since the allegation raised concerns about whether future presidential transition teams would trust GSA to safeguard their confidential material, and as the committee tasked by the Standing Rules of the Senate to oversee presidential transitions, the committee opened an examination of the GSA’s actions. The information provided to the committee demonstrated that both GSA and transition teams need additional guidance and protections in the event of third-

party interest in the activities and records of a transition team.

The Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization also informed the committee about several other logistical issues that arose during the Obama-Trump transition that needed to be addressed, based on interviews with former transition officials.

Specifically, the *Presidential Transition Enhancement Act of 2019* would:

- Require GSA and presidential transition teams to enter into a contractual agreement for transition activities;
- Require transition teams to designate a representative to whom GSA must direct inquiries or legal instruments for transition team records;
- Require transition teams to develop, publish, and enforce an ethics plan, which includes a Code of Ethical Conduct that must be signed by each transition team member;
- Allow GSA to provide transition services for up to 60 days after inauguration day;
- Clarify the approval process for congressional staff to serve on a transition team;
- Require that an agency's representative on the agency transition directors council be a career employee; and
- Require each agency to prepare a succession plan for each of its senior non-career positions.