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Obama's List Doesn't Quite Match Emily's

By Al Kamen
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Perhaps the plumpest appointment in President-elect *Barack Obama's* Cabinet went to a woman: [Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton](#), who was nominated for secretary of state. But his track record on picking women for his Cabinet is no different from that of the two presidents who preceded him.

With his 20-member Cabinet nearly filled, *Obama* has tapped four women -- Clinton, Arizona Gov. [Janet Napolitano](#) (homeland security secretary), New Jersey official [Lisa P. Jackson](#) (head of the [Environmental Protection Agency](#)) and [Susan E. Rice](#) (U.N. ambassador) -- and women's advocates are clamoring anew for the president-elect to nominate more.

At the start of his first term, *President Bush* nominated four women to his Cabinet. *Bill Clinton* had five women in his Cabinet at the start of his presidency, and *George H.W. Bush* and *Ronald Reagan* each had two, according to research conducted by [New York University's](#) Wagner School of Public Service in partnership with [The Washington Post](#).

"So far the numbers of women don't look great," *Kim Gandy*, president of the [National Organization for Women](#), said of Obama's picks. "George Bush started off with this many, and Bill Clinton, at the height of his presidency, had nine out of 19."

Ellen Malcolm, president and founder of [Emily's List](#), said Obama "obviously started off with a bang, with Janet Napolitano, Hillary Clinton and Susan Rice." She added: "We've been disappointed to see women suggested for some positions and not chosen."

So where could Obama place more female candidates? Only three Cabinet positions remain open, and all bets are that a woman could land at the Labor Department, where the two leading contenders are Michigan Gov. [Jennifer Granholm](#) (D) and [Mary Beth Maxwell](#), the founding executive director of American Rights at Work, a pro-union advocacy group.

Granholm, who is serving her second term, is rumored to be itching for a one-way ride out of Michigan. But asked yesterday whether Granholm would take a position in the administration, spokeswoman [Megan Brown](#) said only that she "is looking forward to serving as governor of Michigan with a partner in the [White House](#)."

Maxwell, a longtime outspoken advocate for labor unions and blue-collar workers, has the enthusiastic backing of [David E. Bonior](#), the former Michigan congressman and House Democratic whip who is believed to have been Obama's top choice for the job before he took himself out of the running. Maxwell would become the first openly gay member of Obama's Cabinet. ([Nancy Sutley](#), also openly gay, was appointed to chair the [White House Council on Environmental Quality](#), which is not Cabinet-level.)

In the Mix

Meanwhile, our favorite former Dallas mayor remains in the mix for one of the remaining three posts. [Ron Kirk](#) is said to be a leading contender for both U.S. trade representative and transportation secretary. After Rep. [Xavier Becerra](#) (D-Calif.), Obama's leading candidate for the trade post, bowed out, the buzz turned to Kirk. Kirk declined to comment on the speculation, but the [FBI](#) was rumored to have been knocking on his door this week to check him out.

Young Guns

At 44, Education Department nominee [Arne Duncan](#) adds to the swelling corps of 40-somethings in the Cabinet -- which grew even larger yesterday when [Peter Orszag](#), nominated to be [Office of Management and Budget](#) director, turned 40.

The Message Guru Is In

Word from Obama inauguration folks is that [Erik Smith](#), who was a top aide to former House speaker [Richard Gephardt](#) and more recently worked on the Obama presidential campaign's advertising portfolio, has been named creative director for the [Presidential Inaugural Committee](#). He's what they call the "message guru," a source said, whose job is to make sure inaugural events reflect Obama's themes of unity and such.

Hey! Maybe he's got some tickets?

Moving In . . .

[Vice President-elect Joe Biden](#), putting more touches on his White House staff, is bringing in his Senate communications director and former press secretary, [Elizabeth Alexander](#), to be his press secretary. Alexander, who's worked for Biden since 2006, earlier worked for the United Nations Foundation and for former [Democratic National Committee](#) chairman [Terence R. McAuliffe](#) in the 2004 campaign.

[Annie Tomasini](#), who had been on Biden's personal office staff in the Senate and worked in Chicago for the Obama campaign, has been picked to be his deputy press secretary, a position she now has on the transition team.

Moving On . . .

For half of the past eight years, the [Food and Drug Administration](#) has been led by acting commissioners, leading critics to say it's desperately in need of new leadership. Even so, there were reports that Commissioner [Andrew C. von Eschenbach](#) might want to stay on.



Not so. Von Eschenbach, in a statement Monday to all employees, said he had fallen "in love" with the agency but that he wanted everyone to know that he was leaving on Jan. 20. We were told he sent the letter out early in order to clarify that he was not looking to stay on and he had always intended to leave then. It seems most unlikely that the new administration would want to keep him on.

With Philip Rucker

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