

## The Washington Post

# Hawaii with Obama: State of the Union, Reagan on the book pile and a car chase

Washington Post Staff Writer

*By Perry Bacon Jr.*

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White House advisers have begun preparing President Obama's next State of the Union address, looking to use the speech to launch the second stage of the Obama presidency.

As the president vacations in Hawaii for the next several days, staff members are vetting ideas for the speech, which Obama will give in late January or early February.

The aides are concentrating on proposals to reduce the growing budget deficit, including some recommended last month by a bipartisan deficit commission. The president is also likely to talk about how to improve U. S. schools, White House officials said.

The budget deficit and the American education system are two issues, both traditionally nonpartisan, that might enable the president to work productively with Republican lawmakers.

"Education reauthorization will be a big item we work on next year, and another issue to get bipartisan solutions," press secretary Robert Gibbs wrote Thursday during a Twitter discussion in which he took questions from members of the public.

It's not surprising that the White House is working on the speech now, as most

administrations spend weeks in preparation. But the Obama administration is using the runup to the State of the Union to tout the address as part of a broader effort to forge closer relationships with Republicans and to suggest that gridlock is not inevitable with the new GOP majority in the House.

### Call from Russia

On Thursday, the president spoke by phone with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, who congratulated Obama on the Senate approval of the new START treaty. The two leaders discussed working together on Iran sanctions and the situations in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, the White House Press Office said in a statement.

### Out on the green

For Obama, there was lots of play and little work in Honolulu on Thursday. He spent five

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hours playing golf with three longtime friends, one of whom (Eric Whitaker) flew down from Chicago to join the president on vacation.

#### Seeking wisdom from another predecessor?

Former president Bill Clinton, who attended a news conference with Obama this month, apparently isn't the only ex-president who has caught Obama's interest as he begins the second half of his term.

Administration aides said the president's vacation reading includes "President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime," a biography by Lou Cannon, a former Washington Post reporter who has written several books on Reagan.

#### Taking on the 'birthers'

Hawaii's Gov. Neil Abercrombie (D), who took office Dec. 6, says he is tired of the so-called birther movement, which for years has falsely claimed that Obama was not born in the United States and therefore cannot legally serve as president.

In an interview with Michael Memoli of the Tribune, Abercrombie - who knew Obama's parents - said that would be make it a priority to further debunk the falsehood.

"What bothers me is that some people who should know better are trying to use this for political reasons," Abercrombie said. "Maybe I'm the only one in the country that could

look you right in the eye right now and tell you, 'I was here when that baby was born.' "

As Memoli writes in the report, it's unclear what more Abercrombie could do. Authorities in Hawaii have consistently refuted the birthers' claim with documents and evidence of Obama's birth in 1961 in Hawaii. And renewed attention on the subject might not be good for the White House.

#### Not the smartest getaway route

A Hawaiian man wanted on several driving offenses got into a car chase with local police here as they tried to arrest him. According to police, the man drove past one of the initial security checkpoints in the beachfront neighborhood where the Obama family is staying.

The man was still far removed from the first family, whose rental house is only accessible

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after passing another security checkpoint that is even more heavily guarded. But as Secret Service agents and local police closed in, the man turned the car around quickly. Photographers took pictures of a Secret Service agent sprinting toward the scene and pointing a gun at a vehicle, according to the Associated Press.

Local police eventually caught and arrested the man. The incident was not related to Obama's visit to Hawaii, according to Secret Service spokesman Edwin Donovan.

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