

Excerpt from White House briefing 1.22.09

Q: One on the quick executive order on -- yesterday on lobbying. The President said he was going to be closing the revolving door, and that basically anybody who had been a lobbyist, comes into his administration, they can't work on the issues they lobbied on. You've got William Lynn, who is the nominee to be the Deputy Defense Secretary, who was a lobbyist for Raytheon, a major defense contractor. How can the President say that he's preventing people from working in the areas where they lobbied when the number two at Defense was a Raytheon lobbyist?

MR. GIBBS: The -- I think you saw in today's papers, you had experts that study the issue of transparency and ethics laud the steps that the President took yesterday to end gifts, to end lobbying, to strengthen ethics and openness -- that that exceeds what any administration has previously done in the history of this country. That's what the President pledged in his campaign, and that's exactly what he did yesterday in signing these executive orders.

Those very same experts that lauded the greatest ethical standard ever administered to an executive branch also believe, as the President does, that any standard is not perfect, that a waiver process that allows people to serve their country is necessary. In the case of Mr. Lynn, he's somebody who obviously is superbly qualified. His experience going back to his Pentagon jobs during the Clinton administration make him uniquely qualified to do this.

The President believes that, as these experts do, that a very limited numbers of waivers --

Q But he's not really closing the revolving door, though.

MR. GIBBS: No, I -- any of the people that work here, and myself, are prohibited, as the executive order states, from walking --

Q But Deputy Defense Secretary is a pretty big job. We're at war in two countries right now. So he's a lobbyist, and now he's going to be Deputy Defense Secretary.

MR. GIBBS: Right. And if he ever leaves this administration, he'll never, as the President said, be able to lobby this administration as it relates to the work that it does for the length or entirety of that administration.

Again, what the President did yesterday was institute the strongest ethical and transparency guidelines that any administration has lived under in the history of the country.