

*Analysis of Legislative Prospects in the Obama-Biden Administration  
and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress*

Among the lessons learned from the 2008 elections is that voters are tired of partisan politics and want the Congress and the Executive Branch to develop solutions to the myriad of problems and challenges they face. Moreover, the voters have asked that the new President lead a bi-partisan effort to evaluate all the good ideas and adopt those that best serve the needs and interests of the American people. Dutko Worldwide—the leading bi-partisan firm in Washington—has focused on those areas that represent not only the priorities of the new Administration but also the priorities that the American people believe our leaders must address.

Dutko Worldwide is also reshaping the public affairs and advocacy world. We offer our clients a broad array of services including grassroots and grasstops, research, message development, polling, as well as state and federal government affairs representation. The policy and political environments are rapidly evolving and Dutko Worldwide has been building the new capabilities necessary for our clients to succeed in a new era of policy making political discourse.

The Dutko team has prepared this memo to provide friends and clients with what we believe may be early activity by the Obama-Biden Administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Our memo addresses several areas including energy and environment, health care, education, the economic recovery and financial sector restructuring. We provide an overview in each area as well as contact information for specific Dutko professionals who can provide additional information and deeper insight.

*Energy & Environment*

**The Obama-Biden Administration**

One of the starkest contrasts between the current Bush Administration and the incoming Obama White House will be in energy and environment sectors. As the transition chief, John Podesta, has indicated, President-elect Obama is likely to undo many of the energy policies enacted by the Bush Administration. The new Administration will cease opening new lands and streamlining permitting processes to extractive industries. Moreover, given recent abatement of the dramatic increases in energy costs, the Obama Administration may seek to reinstate executive bans on offshore drilling that have stood for nearly two decades. Bush's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) experienced significant budget cuts and worked to ease air and water regulations which the new Administration will certainly reverse. Perhaps most significantly, the Obama Administration will reengage with the global community on climate change and will be open to new taxes and regulations for the oil and gas sectors.

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Some of the top priorities the Obama Administration include:

- Re-engage the United States in global climate change discussion and agreements
- Implement an economy-wide cap and trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050
- Enact a windfall profits tax (and other tax increases) on oil and gas companies
- Increase regulation in the area of energy commodities trading and speculation
- Create a new tax credit for purchasing Advanced Vehicles.
- Establish a national low carbon fuel standard.
- Require oil and gas companies that already own federal leases to begin to immediately develop those lands or cede the development rights back to the federal government
- Further increase automobile fuel economy standards
- Require that 10% of the nation's electricity comes from renewable sources by 2012, and 25% by 2025
- Weatherize one million homes annually and encourage energy efficiency

With larger Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate, and with public sentiment on his side, the new President could very well get some of these initiatives enacted early in 2009. Increased regulation of the energy futures markets and new incentives and requirements for renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency are likely candidates for early action. Further, the new President can be expected to begin engaging the rest of the world in global climate change discussions immediately upon taking office.

Some of President Obama's agenda, however, will be very difficult to enact into law even with new majorities in Congress—particularly new CAFÉ standards and laws to address global climate change. The extraordinary budget constraints will also diminish the opportunities to start or expand tax credit programs and new spending.

Both Bush and Obama do seem to be in agreement on the issue of renewable fuels. President Bush has called for and signed into law unprecedented renewable fuels mandates requiring the use of up at least 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels. President-elect Obama has supported this legislation in the past, and continues to support the mandates and other subsidies for renewable fuels. Changing renewable fuel mandates, tariffs and other incentives will not be changed without a fight, as energy independence will continue to be a theme throughout the Obama Administration.

In terms of how an Obama Administration will address energy, it is likely that the EPA will be raised to Cabinet-level status or some new entity such as a "National Energy Council" may be created to add visibility to an already high-profile issue. The Department of Energy may also see its role in national energy policy expand and issues other than nuclear safety and security could begin taking up the bulk of DOE's resources. It is very likely that the DOE could receive increased funding for research, development and deployment projects; as well as enhancements of such successful programs as EnergyStar.

EPA can be expected to return to a Clinton-type activist role, with a particular focus on expanding the Clean Air Act to cover greenhouse gases, revisiting the ozone standard, approving the Clean Air Act waiver to develop GHG standards for vehicles in California, issuing stringent California-style VOC rules, developing (with or without legislation) stricter toxics standards, and emphasizing enforcement. California air regulations as well as its new toxics program, will serve as a model for EPA's expanded regulatory program.



As far as other regulatory programs, EPA will look to curtail chemicals found in our water supply (like pharmaceuticals), and expand Great Lakes protections. EPA can be expected to seek stricter (and mandatory) restrictions on the disposal and exporting of e-waste. In addition, environmentalists will seek EPA to regulate waste generated from concentrated animal feeding operations (even if the current Administration issues a rule this year).

Many within EPA, as well as environmental groups, believe that for the past eight years, science has taken a back seat to politics in the development of policy and regulation. Obama and his team have indicated that EPA policy must be science driven, and that protection of human health and the environment is consistent with economic growth.

## **Legislative Priorities for the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress**

There will be a great deal of activity in the areas of energy and environmental policy from the outset of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. After passage of the Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007, Congressional Democrats were largely stifled in their attempt to pass additional legislation. With greatly expanded majorities in both the House and Senate several new initiatives are likely to receive Congressional approval.

The issue of climate change has received a great deal of Congressional attention already, and that will continue in 2009. Increased Democratic margins are not dispositive, however. Many of the issues that make climate change legislation so difficult and controversial are regional rather than partisan. In addition, given the nation's economic crisis and the complexity of addressing global climate change, it is less likely that any economy-wide approach to the issue will be enacted in the next 12 months, despite the strong urging by the environmental community. Nevertheless, the topic of global climate change is certain to be the subject of multiple bills, sub and full committee hearings and markups and potentially even chamber debate. The action that takes place in the coming Congress will almost certainly set the groundwork for future statutes.

Beyond climate change, there are many opportunities for Congress to act on energy and environmental policies. The Democratic Congress must take on the task of restoring the nation's economy, and they will be eager to reward organized labor for its help in the recent elections. Therefore, there are likely to be several new programs and incentives put in place for the creation and advancement of green jobs and to provide training for those jobs. Congressional Democrats are also likely to give President-elect Obama a legislative victory by providing additional regulation to energy futures markets as well as require oil and gas companies to begin developing leases on government land or relinquish control of those mineral rights. This "Use it or Lose it" approach is widely supported by Democrats on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

In addition to other traditional forms of public works and infrastructure such as roads and bridges, Congress may also be very supportive of projects to build out and develop the nation's electricity grid. This could be in the form of direct project spending or even incentivizing utilities and other load serving entities to invest in grid modernization.

After years of debate, Congressional Democrats also see the opportunity to finally enact a federal, nationwide Renewable Portfolio Standard requiring power companies to generate a percentage of their electricity from renewable sources. Targets as high as 25% of the nation's electricity needs coming from renewable sources by



2025 have been suggested, but several Republicans and Democrats from the southeast and Midwest will work to reduce the figure.

Several energy and environmental policies will arise through other legislative vehicles. For example, there will almost certainly be a large and visible debate over offshore and onshore drilling through the FY 2010 appropriations process. Further, the reauthorization of the Highway Bill will provide another venue to debate fuel economy standards as well as land use and planning and public transportation. Other topics such as these will play themselves out beginning almost immediately with the new Congress.

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*Health Care*

**Obama-Biden Administration**

The Obama-Biden plan centers on three basic principles: 1.) provide affordable, accessible health care coverage for all Americans building on the existing health care system, 2.) lower costs by investing in health information technology, prevention and care coordination and 3.) promote public health by requiring preventive services and increasing state and local preparedness for natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

The Obama-Biden plan will create a National Health Insurance Exchange Program. Through the Exchange Program, individuals will be able to purchase either a qualified private insurance plan or a public plan. Either of these types of plans would be required to include: comprehensive benefits similar to the Federal Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), affordable premiums, co-pays and deductibles, easy enrollment and portability. Employers would be required to either offer health insurance plans or pay a tax that helps to fund the public plan.

The plan has been estimated to cost between \$50 and \$65 billion, which would be paid for through expiring 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. The plan also includes policies to provide for prescription drug reimportation, direct drug price negotiation by the HHS Secretary, a reduction in Medicare Advantage reimbursement rates, promote generic drug utilization, increase HHS OIG anti-fraud measures, and finally an independent institute to be responsible for comparative effectiveness reviews.

*Health Care Reform*

Health care reform remains at the forefront of the Congressional agenda. On the Senate side, the HELP, Finance and Budget Committee staffs have been in discussions as to what a workable reform plan would look like. HELP Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) has publicly stated that health reform is his #1, #2, and #3 priority in the upcoming Congress. Look for the HELP Committee to take the lead on any package with the Finance and Budget Committees inserting their perspectives as their jurisdictions allow for. On



the House side, the Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce and Education and Labor Committees will take the lead on hammering out consensus with the Senate.

With a larger Democratic majority in both the House and Senate, reform will focus on creating mechanisms to provide for individuals without employment based coverage, promoting employer sponsored and group health insurance markets and expanding programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP. Republicans will tend to focus on promoting small group and individual markets through refundable tax credits to individuals and families as a source to purchase individual insurance plans. Other key elements discussed by those involved in the debate are pay-for-performance policies, primary prevention and chronic disease prevention and improved health information technology as a source of cost savings. Both parties tend to agree on the need to increase primary prevention as a means to reduce tertiary costs. Further agreement in principle exists on the need to better manage chronic diseases, as treatment of them accounts for the greatest of expenditures by the Medicare program. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus has developed a “white paper” to detail his plans for health care reform. The white paper is slated to be released tomorrow, November 12<sup>th</sup>.

In a recent Op/Ed in the Washington Post, Senator Kennedy stressed, “The system is broken. And it’s no longer just patents demanding change.” He goes on to say, “We can no longer afford not to act. The cost will be substantial, but the need for reform is too great to be deflected or delayed.”

### Legislative Priorities for the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress

- **SCHIP.** Congress must act to reauthorize the State Children’s Health Insurance Program as it is scheduled to expire March 31, 2009. In 2007, the House passed the Children’s Health and Medicare Protection (CHAMP) Act, which would have expanded eligibility and benefits under the program. The bill was eventually vetoed by the President. As the Obama-Biden Health Plan calls for expanded Medicaid and SCHIP eligibility, this is the likely primary initial area of focus for the new Administration. Likely offsets include cuts to Medicare Advantage payments and increases in the tobacco tax.
- **Medicare Physician Payment Fix (SGR).** The Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate will create a 20.6% reduction in reimbursement for physicians treating Medicare patients effective January 1, 2010. This is clearly untenable. Congress has periodically chosen to address SGR reimbursement reductions through short term “patches”. However, it appears that Congress will take on revamping the entire physician payment system later in the first session of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- **Medicare Reform.** There has been a groundswell of support for reforming many aspects of the Medicare program. As discussed above, serious attempts to thoroughly re-examine and rework the physician reimbursement system will be undertaken. The Part D benefit will also be scrutinized for cost savings. Democratic leaders in both the House and Senate will call for more government involvement and control on matters such as premium increases and coverage gaps (“doughnut hole”). Rep. Waxman is drafting legislation to import the Medicaid drug price rebate for so-called “dual-eligibles” in Part D. The Biden-Obama Health Plan calls for direct negotiation of prescription drug prices by the Secretary of HHS and therefore this issue will also be given consideration by both Houses. Cuts to Medicare Advantage reimbursement rates could occur, in particular, as a financing option to address or “offset” the physician payment fix. The Obama-Biden Health Plan also calls for payment neutrality between Medicare Advantage and traditional fee-for-



service rates- further underscoring the potentiality of cuts. Other providers such as hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies will also be facing payment adjustments.

In its June 2008 report MedPAC urged the development of pilot programs to look at different payment systems. Among those pilots to be initiated is one looking at medical homes. Look for a variety of pilot programs to be developed and analyzed as the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress unfolds.

- **Medicaid.** With the call for expanded coverage for Medicaid beneficiaries as a backdrop and CMS declaring Medicaid spending as unsustainable (projected to rise to \$674 billion by 2017), the call for increased federal assistance to the states will be great. This will undoubtedly be brought up in discussions on any economic stimulus package that would be generated, possibly as early as next week.

### *Priority Issues*

- **Universal Coverage/Uninsured.** The concept of reducing the number of uninsured is not new. Democrats and Republicans alike agree that it should and will be a high priority to the incoming Administration, as well as the new Congress. It will be the centerpiece of any health reform plan that is put forward. As noted earlier, Democratic policy will focus on employer based and group health insurance markets, while expanding programs such as Medicaid and SCHIP. Some Democrats have also suggested allowing certain uninsured individuals to “buy in” to the Medicare program. Republican policy will trend toward tax equity in health care while specifically providing for tax credits towards the purchase of individual insurance plans for individuals and families.
- **Comparative Effectiveness.** Comparative effectiveness research is emerging as a tool to address rising health care costs. More specifically, comparative effectiveness research is seen as a method by which patient care can be better managed, patient outcomes improved and systemic inefficiencies addressed. To this point, one point of contention has been the extent to which research findings would be linked to coverage and payment decisions. Senate Finance staff have met with stakeholders and are endeavoring to craft a bill that would create an independent comparative effectiveness research entity. In the House, Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chairman Stark has promoted CE as a critical part of his health agenda next year. In his recently released agenda, he states, “Providers and patients need better information about how different treatments for a given illness stack up against one another. Right now, this information is either non-existent, incomplete, or financed by companies that have a financial stake in making their products look good.”
- **Health IT.** Interest in health IT legislation remains high going into the new Congress. As the Obama-Biden plan has made electronic medical records and improved health IT one of its cornerstones towards improving quality outcomes and overall systemic cost savings, bipartisan efforts on this issue will continue to grow. Several health IT bills were introduced in the previous Congress, but ran amok based on a variety of roadblocks, chief amongst them, privacy and funding. It will be at the core of any health reform bill.
- **Health Disparities.** The issue of health disparities is a priority for the Congressional Black, Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander Caucuses. President-Elect Obama, along with Senator Kennedy and others, introduced the Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity

Elimination Act in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. This bill will be reintroduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> as either a freestanding bill or will be incorporated into a larger health reform package. Additional bills will undoubtedly be introduced in the coming Congress, focusing on reducing disparities in the delivery of health care to minorities, developing safety net coverage and addressing both cultural and health literacy concerns.

- **Follow-on Biologics.** Legislation to create an accelerated approval pathway for follow-on biologics will be introduced early in the Congress. During the last Congress, Senators Kennedy, Enzi, Clinton and Hatch agreed on legislation that would create a pathway for biosimilars. The Biologics Price Competition and Innovation Act of 2007 (S. 1695), in part requires the Secretary of HHS to license a biological product if it is biosimilar to or interchangeable with a reference product if it meets certain standards. Further, the bill includes provisions on patent infringement actions related to the exchange of confidential information, good faith negotiations and the filing of an infringement action. In the House, multiple bills have emerged, including a bill sponsored by Rep. Waxman that is supported by the generic drug industry. Reps. Eshoo and Barton and Inslee have also introduced legislation that is more comparable to the agreement on the Senate side. Going forward, changes in leadership at HHS and FDA will certainly impact the direction this legislation takes.
- **FDA Preemption – Device and Drug.** Earlier this year, the Supreme Court decided *Riegel v. Medtronic, Inc.* In this case, the Court found that the pre-emption clause of the Medical Device Amendments of 1976 (MDA) bars state common-law claims challenging the safety or effectiveness of a medical device marketed in a form that received pre-market approval from the FDA. This decision was clearly understood to apply only to medical devices.

Of equal significance, the Supreme Court granted certiorari and at the beginning of this month heard oral arguments in the *Wyeth v. Levine* case. This case presents a similar question in the realm of the pharmaceutical industry. The specific question at hand is- whether the prescription drug labeling decisions imposed on manufacturers by the FDA pre-empt state law product liability claims. The Court is expected to make a decision in the case early next year.

The Food and Drug Administration will continue to be at the center of much debate in the new Congress. The FDA has been subject to much criticism regarding its failure to protect consumers on a variety of levels- regulating prescription drugs, over the counter medications, medical devices, food and cosmetics. Legislation will be introduced to address any and all of these perceived shortcomings, including: restricting DTC advertising, improved pathway for follow-on biologics, state pre-emption, increasing access to and expanding the market for generic drugs and increased restrictions on dietary supplements.

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## *Education*

### **The Obama-Biden Administration**

#### *Priority Issues*

- There are a myriad of education issues that President-elect Barack Obama will have to address during his administration. Over the course of the campaign cycle, Obama listed a number of his priorities for reforming education in the United States, ranging from recruiting and retaining a large number of qualified teachers to the increased accessibility of higher education. Now with the transition approaching, each of these issues will take on new importance as each demand a different approach from the Obama Administration.
- The largest and best publicized issue that Obama will have to confront is the upcoming reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind program, a significant part of President Bush's domestic-policy legacy. While Obama has repeatedly said he agrees with the intention of the program, he believes the program has been under funded federally and wants to revamp the quality of the student assessments the program is using. A further challenge to revamping the assessment criteria will be Obama's desire to somehow tie increases in teacher salary to students' performance on the assessments. On this tack, the Administration will have to tread carefully due to the adamant opposition posed by teachers, namely the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, fervent supporters of the Democratic Party.
- NCLB reauthorization notwithstanding, Obama has a few education initiatives that are much more bipartisan in nature. These issues include an additional \$10 billion funding for early childhood education as well as an additional \$8 billion in scholarships and resources to recruit 30,000 teachers for hard-to-staff schools around the country. In addition, Obama has proposed a new \$4,000 tax credit, contingent on community service, for students in higher education.

#### *The Personnel*

- Having the appropriate people at the helm of the Department of Education will be key to having these education initiatives stay on track. While the Obama/Biden transition team has not begun serious talks as to who will become the next Secretary of Education, speculation has arisen as to the optimal qualities the new Secretary will have. Most observers believe that the new Secretary will have to have some political experience due to the need for the position to carefully balance the relationship between the federal government's education agenda and the execution of that agenda by the states. Due to the inherent federal/state duality of the position, current and former governors seem to fit the bill during this transition discussion. A few of the names that have been suggested are Governor Janet Napolitano (Arizona), and former Governors Michael Easley and James Hunt (both of North Carolina). Some other names that have been suggested are prominent leaders of urban school districts like Joel Klein (New York City) and Arne Duncan (Chicago) as well as prominent Obama campaign advisors on education like Linda Darling-Hammond (Stanford University professor) and Jonathan Schnur.



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## *Economic Recovery*

### **What happened on Wednesday November 12th?**

Secretary Hank Paulson publicly stated on November 12<sup>th</sup> what had been understood for some time – he will direct the TARP funds to the Capital Purchase Plan – not to buying up toxic assets from the banks. At the same time, he threw the auto loan industry bailout back to Capitol Hill, citing the TARP as not having been authorized by the Congress for such a purpose. On foreclosure mitigation, Paulson seemed to punt – dooming the plan announced just a day earlier from FHA’s Brian Montgomery and FHFA’s Jim Lockhart. The latter plan was similar to Sheila Bair’s in getting lenders to reduce principal, interest rates or loan terms for any lender over 90 days in arrears, but failed to give the permanency that the Bair plan gives to delinquent borrowers.

### **Refocus on the Consumer**

The Treasury Secretary indicated they were going to focus now on the following: (1) Creation of a Liquidity Facility for highly-rated AAA asset-backed securities. This is still under discussion, but the Secretary stated the purpose is “to encourage private investors to come back to this troubled market, by providing them access to federal financing while protecting the taxpayers’ investment.” (2) Matching program to leverage the impact of a TARP investment by attracting private capital, also broadening the scope of those eligible under TARP to non-bank financial institutions.

### **Outlook**

The burdens of managing a crisis through a Presidential transition period are beginning to weigh heavily – both downtown and on Capitol Hill. Secretary Paulson has been in a no-win situation for months, with genuinely intractable problems to attempt to resolve. As the transition team has filed into Treasury, seeking education, information and unlimited observation of all elements of the TARP process, the Secretary is faced with continuing to make decisions for which he may be roundly criticized in the future while at the same time being pressed from all sides in rescuing elements of a variety of industries. Yesterday, the Secretary stopped being the “man at the helm” and essentially seemed to be indicating – I’m punting to the Congress.

On the Hill, the preference seems to be to wait for the Obama Administration as well – for the same reasons. To take action now may put them in the position of having made a mistake with taxpayer money.



Speaker Pelosi was considering canceling any Lame Duck session. However, Barney Frank, Chairman of House Financial Services Committee, is now going to take up the auto loan bailout and clarify the statutory language as to the eligibility of the auto industry to receive TARP funds. Chairman Frank will be able to move the bill in Committee and on the floor. The Senate remains a question. Chairman Dodd has been quiet throughout the discussions of the last two days. Very difficult to assess and potentially further damaging for the economy at the moment as even financial institutions struggle with the ongoing changes of direction that TARP continues to take.

Although the November 4<sup>th</sup> election did not have a marked impact in the Congress on the membership of the House Financial Services and Senate Banking Committees, six vacancies will have to be filled in the 70-member House Financial Services Committee and three in Senate Banking. The Presidential election, however, will have an impact that, while emerging only over time, will be significant. Several areas in particular to mention are these:

- **Relationships with Committee Chairs.** Chairmen Christopher Dodd (D.-Conn.) and Barney Frank (D.-Mass.) are knowledgeable in the area of financial services and have generally worked effectively with the outgoing Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson—at least until November 12th. The hope is that the incoming Treasury Secretary can achieve the same degree of trust and constructive interaction with these Chairmen that Paulson has, especially in light of the seriousness of the circumstances presented.
- **Key Pending Issues – Foreclosures, Bankruptcy Cramdown, TARP.** Controversy continues over the issue of loan foreclosures. When Congress returns, their focus will have to be on how to resolve this concern. President-elect Obama has proposed reducing foreclosures by imposing a 90-day moratorium for homeowners “acting in good faith”. Chairman Frank has also called for a moratorium. FDIC Chair Sheila Bair proposes a federal guarantee on mortgage loans to lenders who reduce the monthly payments of borrowers to a level to no more than 38% of their income. In addition to the foreclosure issue, many in Congress, including Barney Frank, have supported allowing bankruptcy court judges to modify the terms of loans.
- **Regulation of Unregulated industries.** The regulatory reform effort will be comprehensive, but time-consuming and controversial. The Securities and Exchange Commission has clearly lost the faith of the Congress and the American people, in terms of its ability to “watch over” sufficiently the new world of financial derivatives. Hedge funds, private equity firms and the insurance industry are all going to be under new Congressional scrutiny, in an effort to understand and then regulate their activities. The focus will be on identifying and regulating those activities which contributed to the systemic risk the global economy is now attempting to reverse.

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## *Research and Polling*

Dutko Worldwide also recognizes impacting a changing public policy world requires deploying new advocacy tools. We are constantly updating the resources we offer our clients to better monitor, predict and influence legislation, regulation and issue campaigns. Among the services we provide in the evolving advocacy world are research, polling, focus groups, message development, strategic communications, web advocacy and advertising, and grassroots consulting.

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## *Implications for working with a larger Democratic Majority and the Obama-Biden Administration.*

Over the course of Dutko Worldwide's nearly thirty years of managing our clients' public affairs, we have developed a reputation as creative and constructive participants in the public policy making process. The incoming Administration has set forth a rigorous framework for lobbyists who engage with the Executive Branch—a framework we at Dutko have long operated within by choice. We engage our clients by building public-private partnerships within which we help them develop strategies aimed at achieving sound public policy outcomes. We look forward to continuing that tradition of creating win-win solutions with the Obama-Biden Administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

