



# Obama's Consigliere

*Valerie Jarrett Is "The Single Most Influential Person In The Obama White House"*

**Though She Had No National Experience When She Joined The Administration, Jarrett Is "The Single Most Influential Person In The Obama White House."** "A Chicagoan who helped Mr. Obama navigate his rise through that city's aggressive politics, Ms. Jarrett came to Washington with no national experience. But her unmatched access to the Obamas has made her a driving force in some of the most significant domestic policy decisions of the president's first term, her persuasive power only amplified by Mr. Obama's insular management style. From the first, her official job has been somewhat vague. But nearly four years on, with Mr. Obama poised to accept his party's renomination this week, her standing is clear, to her many admirers and detractors alike. 'She is the single most influential person in the Obama White House,' said one former senior White House official, who like many would speak candidly only on condition of anonymity." (Jo Becker, "The Other Power In The West Wing," [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

## JARRETT FAILED AS OBAMA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

**Obama Put Jarrett In Charge Of "Relations With Business."** "Mr. Obama, taking office amid a financial crisis and the worst recession since the Great Depression, recruited advisers experienced in economics and governmental crisis management. That included Mr. Summers, a former Treasury secretary, and Timothy F. Geithner, who had been president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as Treasury secretary. To be in charge of relations with business, Mr. Obama picked one of his closest advisers from Chicago, Valerie Jarrett, a former chief executive of Habitat Company, a real estate development company." (Sheryl Gay Stolberg And Jackie Calmes, "Executives Look For Place On Obama Team," [The New York Times](#), 12/14/10)

- **"Jarrett Was Obama's Choice To Be His Liaison With Business, A Relationship That Went Sour Right At The Start."** "Jarrett was Obama's choice to be his liaison with business, a relationship that went sour right at the start. At the U.S. Chamber of Commerce she is associated with one of the most difficult relationships the Chamber has had with any administration. She subtly criticized the Chamber and its CEO, Tom Donohue, saying publicly the White House preferred meeting with real industry executives, such as the members of a competing organization, the Business Roundtable. At the time, the Roundtable was considered somewhat more supportive of White House initiatives on health care and climate change. Obama's Wall Street supporters wondered why Jarrett didn't stop Obama from referring to bankers as 'fat cats'

in comments about the need for financial regulation, a phrase Obama quickly abandoned.” (Christi Parsons, “The President’s Right-Hand Woman,” [Chicago Tribune](#), 2/19/11)

- **“But Some In The Business Community Do Not Regard Her As An Effective Advocate....”** “But some in the business community do not regard her as an effective advocate; she is so close to the president, some say, that she is more apt to tell them what he thinks than the other way around. ‘In the Clinton White House, people in the business community turned to someone like Bob Rubin when there was discussion internally,’ said one Democratic lobbyist, who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid criticizing a president of his own party. ‘It’s not an anti-Valerie thing; I just don’t think they believe that there is anybody inside with that stature and that view.’” (Sheryl Gay Stolberg And Jackie Calmes, “Executives Look For Place On Obama Team,” [The New York Times](#), 12/14/10)
- **Jarrett Blamed “The Discord Between The Administration And Business Leaders” On “The Crisis The President Inherited.”** “In an interview, Ms. Jarrett said the discord between the administration and business leaders was an inevitable result of the crisis the president inherited and of the uncertainty businesses felt in the debates over health care and financial regulations. Now, she said, the two sides can turn the page. Conflict with the health and financial industries is sure to persist, however, as the administration writes the regulations to put the new laws into effect.” (Sheryl Gay Stolberg And Jackie Calmes, “Executives Look For Place On Obama Team,” [The New York Times](#), 12/14/10)

**Former Obama Economic Adviser Larry Summers: Obama “Paid A Price” With The Business Community Which Felt “Patronized And Offended By Valerie.”** “Summers said he thought Obama should have taken a consistent line more reassuring to business. Though he had been the chief business contact for the administration, Valerie Jarrett was the ambassador, and Summers said the president paid a price with the business community for keeping her in that role. ‘And she sure talked like she was speaking for [the president],’ Summers said, ‘and he didn’t disabuse them of that, so I think they felt patronized and offended by Valerie.’” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, pp. 81-82)

- **Jarrett’s Solution To Dealing With Business Leaders Was To “Just Set Up Three More Lunches” Or More Meetings With Obama.** “Summers found the president defensive in some interactions with business leaders, which wasn’t effective. The Jarrett solution was often, ‘We’ll just set up three more lunches with the president and business leaders.’ She had the view that if you simply arranged more meetings, that would solve any problem. But the interactions had an emptiness that made the problem worse. Sometimes, it’s not a good idea to have a meeting and discussion.” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, p. 82)

**When Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg Complained To Jarrett That Obama Chatted With Him For Only 15 Seconds After Being Invited To The White House Super Bowl Party, Jarrett’s Response Was “Hey, You’re In The Room With Him. You Should Be Happy.”** “The White House invited Seidenberg and two other CEOs to the president’s Super Bowl party on Sunday, February 7, 2010. Seidenberg felt courted. Neither Clinton nor Bush had invited him to the White House. There was a blizzard that day, which made travel unappealing, but there was no way he was going to snub the president. At the White House, Obama chatted with Seidenberg for about 15 seconds before the game. But then he went down to the front row to watch the game with his buddies. That was it. Fifteen seconds. Seidenberg felt he had been used as window dressing. He complained to Valerie Jarrett, a close Obama aide and longtime family friend from Chicago, whose duties included managing relations with business executives and the White House. Her response: Hey, you’re in the room with him. You should be happy. Seidenberg was not.” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, pp. 47-48)

**IBM CEO Sam Palmisano Thought Valerie Jarrett And David Axelrod Were “Political Hacks” And “B Or C Players’ Who Did Not Know How To Get Serious About Fixing Problems And Following Through.”** “He had people like Emanuel whose primary focus was Congress. And Obama had Valerie Jarrett and David Axelrod but they were advisers, and in Palmisano’s view ‘political hacks’ and ‘B or C players’ who did not know how to get serious about fixing problems and following through. There was no implementer. Thus the country was adrift and was not serious about its most fixable problem—becoming and staying competitive. Whatever the analysis, however, it was clear the Obama business outreach needed work.” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, p. 51)

## JARRETT SUPPORTED FAILED GREEN ENERGY LOANS

### *Jarrett Was Aware Of Solyndra’s Risks*

**Mega-Bundler Steve Westly E-mailed Jarrett Warning Her Of Solyndra’s Potential Political Fallout.** “Steve Westly, a California venture capitalist who raised more than \$500,000 for Obama’s campaign, exchanged emails with Valerie Jarrett, one of Obama’s closest advisers, to warn her about political fallout that could ensue if the president visited the factory being built by Solyndra.” (Matthew Mosk And Ronnie Greene, “Obama on Solyndra: ‘Hindsight Is Always 20/20,’” [ABC News](#), 10/3/11)

- **Westly E-mail To Jarrett:** “Could you perhaps check with [the Energy Department] to make sure they’re comfortable with the company? I just want to help protect the president from anything that could result in negative or unfair press.” (Matthew Mosk And Ronnie Greene, “Obama on Solyndra: ‘Hindsight Is Always 20/20,’” [ABC News](#), 10/3/11)
- **Westly:** “If it’s too late to change/postpone the meeting, the president should be careful about unrealistic/optimistic forecasts that could haunt him in the next 18 months if Solyndra hits the wall, files for bankruptcy.” (Matthew Mosk And Ronnie Greene, “Obama on Solyndra: ‘Hindsight Is Always 20/20,’” [ABC News](#), 10/3/11)

**After Westly’s Email, Jarrett Emailed Biden’s Chief Of Staff Ron Klain Who Acknowledged That There Were “Risk Factors,” But Said The Company “Looks Like It Is OK.”** “Ms. Jarrett emailed Mr. Klain, the Biden aide. Mr. Klain acknowledged ‘some risk factors here—but that’s true of any innovative company that POTUS [the president of the United States] would visit. It looks like it is OK to me, but if you feel otherwise, let me know.’” (Deborah Solomon, “White House Brushed Off Solyndra Worries, Emails Show,” [The Wall Street Journal](#), 10/3/11)

- **Jarrett Said That Highlighting Solyndra Had “An Inherent Risk.”** “‘There is an inherent risk in highlighting a single company before they have a track record,’ Valerie Jarrett, a senior adviser to Obama, wrote to Ronald Klain, Vice President Joe Biden’s chief of staff, on May 24, 2010.” (Darren Samuelsohn, “2010 email on Solyndra: ‘Bad Days Are Coming,’” [Politico](#), 10/4/11)
- **Klain Admitted To Jarrett In May 2010 That Solyndra Was “Burning Capital, Perhaps A Bit Fast” And That The Company May Not Be Viable “Outside Of The 18-24 Month Window.”** “Ronald A. Klain, the chief of staff for Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and a backer of the loan, told Valerie Jarrett, a presidential adviser, in a May 24, 2010, e-mail, ‘they are burning capital, perhaps a bit fast, and are dependent on a break or two to be viable outside of the 18-24 month window.’” (Matthew L. Wald, “More Solyndra E-mails, And Warnings,” *The New York Times*’ [“The Caucus,”](#) 10/4/11)

### *Jarrett Pressured The Department Of Energy To Loan Money To A Nuclear Fuel Plant*

**Obama Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett Met With Energy Department Management Consultant Matt Rogers In The White House Situation Room To Pressure Him On A Loan Recipient.** “Rogers did tell

me he once encountered White House pressure, when a uranium enrichment company called USEC was pursuing a loan for a nuclear fuel plant in Ohio, but even that tale illustrates the limits of political interference in Obamaworld. The president had promised to support the plant during his campaign, so after Rogers rejected the loan, he was summoned to explain his decision to Jarrett – in the Situation Room, of all places. (It looks exciting in the movies, with all those video screens and blinking lights, but the West Wing is so overcrowded that it's sometimes used as an ordinary conference room.) Rogers explained his skepticism about USEC, a former government enterprise. For one thing, it would still be short of the cash it needed to complete the plant even if the loan went through, a neon red flag in project finance. Deals are supposed to cover the cigars for the closing dinner – in other words, everything. 'You realize the president made a campaign promise?' Jarrett asked. Yes, Rogers did. 'Well, if you're sure, you're sure,' Jarrett said. 'But you better be sure.'" (Michael Grunwald, *The New New Deal*, 2012, p. 387)

## JARRETT SEEN AS A "MANAGEABLE PROBLEM" FOR OTHER SENIOR STAFF

**"Valerie Is Effectively The Chief Of Staff...."** "Mr. Obama's first two chiefs of staff, Rahm Emanuel and Mr. Daley, clashed with Ms. Jarrett over strategic direction and over who had greater authority to interpret and carry out the president's wishes, several officials said. 'He's got a real mess in the West Wing,' said one close presidential adviser. 'Valerie is effectively the chief of staff, and he knows, but he doesn't know. She's almost like Nancy Reagan was with President Reagan, but more powerful.'" (Jo Becker, "The Other Power In The West Wing," [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

- **David Axelrod: Jarrett Is "A Manageable Problem."** "There is an inherent challenge in managing anyone, this is not particular to Valerie, who is a senior adviser and part of a structure, and also close personally with the family,' said David Axelrod, the president's chief strategist. 'Obviously it's cleaner and less complicated if everyone is discussing things at the same meetings. But it's a manageable problem.'" (Jo Becker, "The Other Power In The West Wing," [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

**Although Part Of A Tradition Of White House Confidantes, Jarrett Is Unique In Her "Ability To Step Outside Traditional White House Protocol."** "To some extent, Ms. Jarrett is part of a White House tradition. Bill Clinton brought along his fellow Arkansan Bruce Lindsey as his Mr. Fix-It. Mr. Bush had his Texas confidantes, Karen Hughes and Harriet Miers. But few have had the stature — and the ability to step outside traditional White House protocol — of Ms. Jarrett. She is the only staff member who regularly follows the president home from the West Wing to the residence, a practice that has earned her the nickname 'the Night Stalker.' By day, Mr. Obama is 'Mr. President' to her, but in social settings, he is just 'Barack.' When the Obamas take an out-of-town break, she often goes along." (Jo Becker, "The Other Power In The West Wing," [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

- **National Journal: "In A White House In Which Officials Are Advised To 'Stay In Their Lane,' Jarrett Commands Perhaps The Widest Berth."** "In a White House in which officials are advised to 'stay in their lane,' Jarrett commands perhaps the widest berth. 'Because she has so much access to the president, he really counts on her to advise him on a wide portfolio of issues,' said Carol Browner, the former director of the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change. 'For Valerie, it is 24-7 about the president. That is her whole agenda.'" (Beth Reinhard, "Valerie Jarrett: The Pro Who Might As Well Be Family," [National Journal](#), 9/4/12)

**Jarrett Has A Full-Time Secret Service Detail.** "A case in point is her full-time Secret Service detail. The White House refuses to disclose the number of agents or their cost, citing security concerns. But the appearance so worried some aides that two were dispatched to urge her to give the detail up. She listened politely, one said, but the agents stayed." (Jo Becker, "The Other Power In The West Wing," [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)



### *Jarrett Is “Mr. Obama’s Spine”*

**“Ms. Jarrett Is Mr. Obama’s Spine.”** “Ms. Jarrett often serves as a counterweight to the more centrist Clinton veterans in the administration, reminding them and her innately cautious boss that he came to Washington to do big things. Some of his boldest moves, on women’s issues, gay rights and immigration, have been in areas she cares about most. If Karl Rove was known as George W. Bush’s political brain, Ms. Jarrett is Mr. Obama’s spine.” (Jo Becker, “The Other Power In The West Wing,” [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

- **Jarrett Is Obama’s “Liberal Id.”** “It was quintessential Valerie Jarrett, according to Ms. Dunn. It is not so much that she is Mr. Obama’s liberal id. Rather, her voice is often the one at the table reminding everyone of the president’s aspirational ‘first principles,’ that he ‘didn’t just come to the White House to hold the office, but to make change,’ Ms. Dunn said.” (Jo Becker, “The Other Power In The West Wing,” [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

### *Jarrett Is Obama’s “Protector In Chief”*

**Jarrett Is Also Obama’s “Gatekeeper” And His “Protector In Chief.”** “She is also his gatekeeper, sometimes using that power to tip the balance in internal debates. After the financial crisis, as the administration grappled with how to rein in Wall Street, Ms. Jarrett made sure that Paul A. Volcker, a former Federal Reserve chairman whose voice was being drowned out, got a meeting with the president. The result: tougher measures than the president’s top economic advisers were advocating. And she is the president’s protector in chief, or as Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner put it, the person who must be as ‘omniscient as possible’ in spotting trouble on the way. Those whom she deems to have failed Mr. Obama tell of scolding late-night calls and her trademark accusation of betrayal: ‘You are hurting the president.’” (Jo Becker, “The Other Power In The West Wing,” [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)

- **Jarrett Takes Political Criticism Of Obama “Personally.”** “With Ms. Jarrett’s unquestioning belief in the president has come a tendency to take political criticism personally, ‘even when it would be more useful not to,’ said Marilyn Katz, a Chicago friend of both Ms. Jarrett and the president. Another friend compared her to a mother whose son can do no wrong: ‘Even when the neighbors call, she says, ‘No, no, that can’t be.’” So when the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, Anthony Romero, publicly criticized some of the president’s antiterrorism policies, she swiftly shoved back. ‘Great harm has been done,’ she warned in an e-mail he shared with colleagues. ‘There has been a material breach of trust.’” (Jo Becker, “The Other Power In The West Wing,” [The New York Times](#), 9/1/12)
- **Jarrett Took Great Offense To Seidenberg Publicly Saying That Obama Showed A “Willingness To Learn” Even Though He Meant It As A Compliment.** “Seidenberg said publicly, ‘I think the president has shown a willingness to learn.’ Jarrett immediately phoned Greg Brown of Motorola. ‘The president is learning?’ she asked. ‘Is Ivan the teacher and he’s the student? This is offensive.’ She emailed Seidenberg directly just one word: ‘Learning?’ Then she called him and expanded her outrage. Valerie, Seidenberg wrote back, that was an extreme compliment. Wasn’t everyone, the president and the CEOs, always supposed to be learning? Unappeased, Jarrett continued contracting other members of the Business Roundtable to say that Seidenberg had insulted the president of the United States.” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, p. 52)

**Even Though Peter Orszag Had Sent Drafts Of His Op-Ed About Reforming Medical Malpractice Laws To The White House In Advance, Jarrett Accused Him Of Disloyalty And Told Him “You Have Burned Your Bridges.”** “Orszag continued his star turn in the op-ed spotlight and a month later drafted a

column to appear October 20, 2010, on the sensitive subject of Obamacare. He wanted to focus on one of its weaknesses. The health care legislation ‘does many things right,’ he wrote. ‘But it does almost nothing to reform medical malpractice laws.’ The president himself, Orszag said, had urged, at the American Medical Association in June 2009, that there should be ‘broader use of evidence-based guidelines’ for doctors treating a specific illness or condition. Orszag proposed that any doctor who could demonstrate he had followed these guidelines should not be held liable for malpractice. Orszag later described the plan to others as a sort of Nixon-goes-to-China moment. By proposing its own version of malpractice reform, the Democratic administration could blunt one of the Republicans’ most common attacks: the claim that Democrats were in the pocket of the trial lawyers, who benefited immensely from medical malpractice cases. Should he alert the White House? he wondered. Better not to surprise them. With some discomfort, because a columnist is supposed to speak for himself, not his former employer, Orszag sent his draft to Valerie Jarrett. It was about three days before the column was scheduled to run. Here’s a draft, he wrote in an email to her. Let me know if you have any comments. Thanks, Jarrett wrote back. She offered no comments on the draft. The column ran as scheduled, unchanged from the draft Orszag had provided the White House. Orszag was in an airport when he got Jarrett’s email. How could you have done this? It’s ridiculous. You’re so disloyal. You have got to realize the health care bill is wildly unpopular, Orszag replied. Every single speech I give, if I lead with this reflection on its imperfections, the dynamic changes. People will then listen. You can’t hold this law out as perfect. It won’t sell. People think it’s a piece of crap. The weaknesses must be acknowledged. Then it’s credible to say, here’s why it is good and why it is the only thing that will work. Jarrett’s answer was delivered with Politburo finality: You have burned your bridges.” (Bob Woodward, *The Price Of Politics*, 2012, pp. 55-56)

**Jarrett Talked Holder Out Of Resigning, Telling Him, “This Will Not Be Good For You And It Will Not Be Good For Your Friend, The President.”** “When Valerie Jarrett heard that Holder was thinking about resigning his post, she took a different tack. Few people could talk to Holder as directly as Jarrett could. She started by gently telling him, ‘You’re my friend and I care about you.’ Then the former veteran of the Richie Daley machine in Chicago lowered the boom. ‘This will not be good for you and it will not be good for your friend, the president,’ she said, not mincing her words. Jarrett didn’t elaborate, but she didn’t have to. Holder understood that if he quit barely two years into Obama’s first term, it would be widely assumed that he was either driven out by Tammany Hall or that he’d quit because he was disillusioned with the administration’s refusal to back him up. His exit would have become a rallying cry for the liberal base of the party and it would damage Obama politically just as the midterm elections were looming. He had to stay.” (Daniel Klaidman, *Kill Or Capture*, 2012, p. 196-97)