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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:  
 Andrew Kohut, Director  
 Michael Remez, Senior Writer

**Unemployment Figures Draw Broad Attention**  
**OBAMA CABINET APPOINTEES HIGHLY VISIBLE**

Public awareness of Barack Obama’s choices for cabinet and other high level posts is substantially higher than awareness of the top picks by George W. Bush and Bill Clinton just before they were first inaugurated. About two-thirds of Americans (65%) can name at least one person that Obama has chosen for a high level post in his administration. In January 2001, fewer than half (43%) could identify a Bush appointee. In January 1993, even fewer (21%) could name someone joining Clinton’s new administration.

Obama Choices More Widely Known		
<i>Recall the names of any _____ appointees?</i>	<u>Yes</u> %	<u>No/DK</u> %
Barack Obama (1/09)	65	35=100
George W. Bush (1/01)	43	57=100
Bill Clinton (1/93)	21	79=100

Question wording: “From what you’ve read and heard, can you recall the names of anyone that Barack Obama has chosen for his cabinet or appointed to other high level government post?”

While the public is paying close attention to news about Obama’s senior appointments, there was far more public interest last week in news about rising unemployment numbers than in reports on Obama’s transition. More than four-in-ten (45%) tracked news about the rising unemployment rate very closely, compared with 30% who followed news about Obama’s transition very closely.

To be sure, much of the increased awareness of Obama’s high-level personnel selections has to do with the president-elect’s selection of Hillary Clinton to serve as secretary of state. Fully 56% of respondents offered Clinton’s name as one of Obama’s top appointments. Yet 35% were able to name a nominee other than Clinton, including 14% who

Most Visible Presidential Appointees				
<i>Appointees named...</i>	Bush <u>Jan 2001</u>		Obama <u>Jan 2009</u>	
		%		%
Colin Powell	33		Hillary Clinton	56
John Ashcroft	8		Leon Panetta	14
Condoleezza Rice	4		Bill Richardson	12
Christine Whitman	3		Rahm Emanuel	6
Tommy Thompson	3		Robert Gates	4
Donald Rumsfeld	2		Tom Daschle	3
Linda Chavez	2		Sanjay Gupta	3
			Janet Napolitano	2
			Joe Biden	2
Other	5		Other	8
No answer	57		No answer	35

Note: Based on total. Figures add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed offer multiple names.

recalled the name of Leon Panetta, Obama's choice to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and 12% who could name Bill Richardson, the New Mexico governor who withdrew his nomination to be commerce secretary on Jan. 4 because of an investigation into the awarding of contracts in his state. (Respondents were permitted to offer the name of more than one appointee.)

In January 2001, the name most mentioned as Bush prepared for his inauguration was Colin Powell, the decorated military leader and former national security advisor whom Bush had tapped to be his secretary of state. A third of Americans (33%) offered Powell's name. Just 19% could name any of Bush's other appointees. Among the most frequently mentioned were John Ashcroft (8%), Bush's first attorney general, and Condoleezza Rice (4%), his first national security advisor. As Clinton took office, the name offered most often by the public was Lloyd Bentsen (8%), the former Texas senator whom Clinton had chosen to be his treasury secretary.

## Two Prominent Nominees

Both the Panetta and Richardson nominations generated significant recent media attention, Richardson for his quick withdrawal just after New Year's Day and Panetta because of questions – raised by Democrats as well as Republicans – about his credentials to take control of the nation's intelligence operations.

Last week, Panetta, a former congressman and Clinton White House chief-of-staff, was the third-ranking newsmaker according to an analysis of media coverage by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism. Obama was the week's top newsmaker, followed by Roland Burris, who is Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich's choice to replace Obama in the U.S. Senate. The previous week, Richardson was the sixth ranking newsmaker, tied with Al Franken, the Minnesota Democrat and Senate candidate.

The Pew Research Center's weekly News Interest Index survey, conducted Jan. 9-12, found no partisan differences among those who could identify Obama appointments. About two-thirds of Republicans (67%), Democrats (66%) and independents (65%) could identify at least one. In 2001, Republicans proved more knowledgeable than Democrats about Bush's team. A majority of Republicans (52%), compared with about four-in-ten independents (42%) and Democrats (40%), could recall at least one person appointed by Bush.

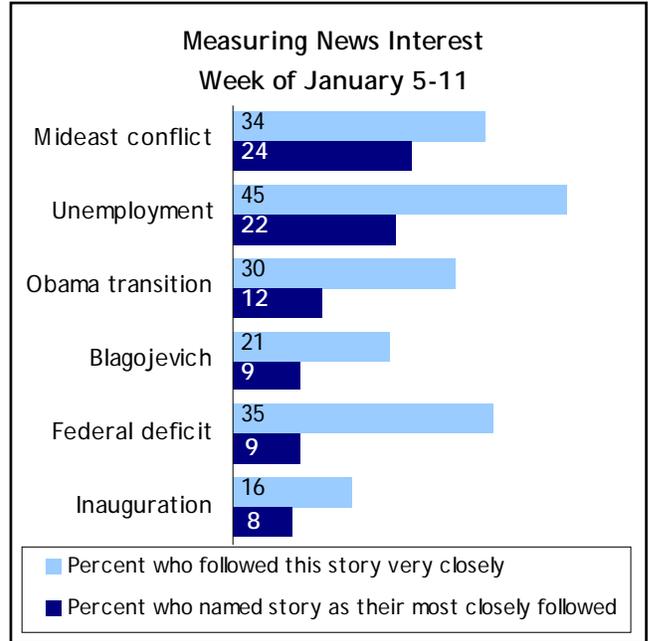
Meanwhile, the public's interest in news about Obama's appointments and plans for his administration is similar to interest at the start of the Clinton administration and greater than at the start of the Bush administration. Two-thirds (67%) say they followed news about the transition very closely (30%) or fairly closely (37%) last week. At the same point in 2001, 58% said they followed news about the Bush transition very closely (26%) or fairly closely (32%). At

the start of Clinton’s first term, 66% said they followed his appointments very closely (24%) or fairly closely (42%).

### Troubling Economic Numbers and Gaza Attract Most Attention

The public remained focused on bad economic news last week, particularly reports of increasing unemployment and significant job losses for 2008 as well as record high federal budget deficit projections for 2009. News about rising unemployment (the rate is at a 16-year high) attracted the very close attention of 45% of the public. Another 34% say they followed this news fairly closely.

More than a third of the public (35%) says they followed news about the latest federal deficit projections very closely and another 30% reported following this news fairly closely. Interest in these economic stories cuts across income groups. Roughly equal proportions of high, middle and low income Americans reported following these two stories very closely.



Rising unemployment was the single news story followed more closely than any other for 22% of Americans. That placed it among the top two stories of the week in terms of public interest. The other top story, the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip, was listed by 24% as the top story of the week. About a third (34%) followed news involving the Israeli-Hamas fighting in Gaza very closely last week, up slightly from 28% the previous week.

Reports about the impeachment of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich over allegations he attempted to sell the state’s vacant U.S. Senate seat for personal gain drew the very close attention of 21% of the public. About one-in-ten (9%) listed this as their most closely followed news story of the week.

Meanwhile, news about preparations for Obama’s inauguration on Jan. 20 was followed very closely by 16% of Americans. Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) say this was the news they followed most closely last week.

These findings are based on the most recent installment of the weekly News Interest Index, an ongoing project of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The index, building on the Center's longstanding research into public attentiveness to major news stories, examines news interest as it relates to the news media's coverage. The weekly survey is conducted in conjunction with The Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, which monitors the news reported by major newspaper, television, radio and online news outlets on an ongoing basis. In the most recent week, data relating to news coverage were collected from January 5-11, 2009 and survey data measuring public interest in the top news stories of the week were collected January 9-12, 2009 from a nationally representative sample of 1,004 adults.

## About the News Interest Index

The *News Interest Index* is a weekly survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press aimed at gauging the public's interest in and reaction to major news events.

This project has been undertaken in conjunction with the Project for Excellence in Journalism's *News Coverage Index*, an ongoing content analysis of the news. The News Coverage Index catalogues the news from top news organizations across five major sectors of the media: newspapers, network television, cable television, radio and the internet. Each week (from Sunday through Friday) PEJ compiles this data to identify the top stories for the week. The News Interest Index survey collects data from Friday through Monday to gauge public interest in the most covered stories of the week.

Results for the weekly surveys are based on telephone interviews among a nationwide sample of approximately 1,000 adults, 18 years of age or older, conducted under the direction of ORC (Opinion Research Corporation). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls, and that results based on subgroups will have larger margins of error.

For more information about the Project for Excellence in Journalism's News Coverage Index, go to [www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org).

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director  
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research  
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors  
Kim Parker, Senior Researcher  
Michael Remez, Senior Writer  
Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, Leah Christian and Jocelyn Kiley  
Research Associates  
Kathleen Holzwart and Alec Tyson, Research Analysts

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**JANUARY 9-12, 2009 NEWS INTEREST INDEX OMNIBUS SURVEY**  
**TOPLINE**  
**N=1,004**

Q.1 Can you tell me the name of the person you've heard the most about in the news lately? **[PROBE IF NECESSARY: Just the name that comes to mind FIRST when you think about who's been in the news lately] [IF ANSWER GIVEN ASK: Who else comes to mind?] [OPEN END. RECORD UP TO TWO MENTIONS. RECORD FIRST MENTION ON FIRST SCREEN AND SECOND MENTION ON SECOND SCREEN]**

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% because of multiple responses.

		Dec 5-8, <u>2008</u>
72	Barack Obama	89
21	Rod Blagojevich	
17	George W. Bush	12
9	Bernard Madoff	
6	John Travolta	
5	Sarah Palin	8
3	Roland Burris	
3	Hillary Clinton	19
2	Caylee Anthony	
1	Caroline Kennedy	
1	Leon Panetta	
1	Arnold Schwarzenegger	
1	Bill Richardson	1
1	Joe Biden	
1	Oprah Winfrey	1
1	Pac Man Jones	
1	Patrick Swayze	
1	Michelle Obama	
13	Other answer given	
10	Don't know/No answer	

Q.2 As I read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past week, please tell me if you happened to follow each news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. First, **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE ITEMS] [IF NECESSARY "Did you follow [ITEM] very closely, fairly closely, not too closely or not at all closely?"]**

	<u>Very Closely</u>	<u>Fairly Closely</u>	<u>Not too Closely</u>	<u>Not at all Closely</u>	<u>DK/ Refused</u>
a. Conflict between the Israeli military and Hamas forces in Gaza	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0=100</b>
<b>January 2-4, 2009</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>1</sup></b>					
<b>March 7-10, 2008</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>*=100</b>
August, 2006	40	34	14	10	2=100

<sup>1</sup> In Early September 2001 through September, 2003 and for Mid-October 2000 and March 7-10, 2008 the item was listed as "Continued violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis." In August 2006 the item was listed as "The military conflict between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon." In April 2001 the item was listed as "Continued violence in the Middle East." In Early October 2000 the item was listed as "Renewed violence in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis." In January 1997 the item was listed as "Renewed tensions between Israelis and Palestinians over Hebron." In October 1996 the item was listed as "Renewed violence between Israelis & Palestinians on the West Bank and in Jerusalem." In May 1988 the item was listed as "The conflict in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories."

**Q.2 CONTINUED...**

	Very <u>Closely</u>	Fairly <u>Closely</u>	Not too <u>Closely</u>	Not at all <u>Closely</u>	DK/ <u>Refused</u>
September, 2003	31	36	20	13	*=100
Early June, 2003	26	40	20	13	1=100
December, 2002	29	36	22	12	1=100
Early October, 2002	32	39	20	8	1=100
June, 2002	38	33	18	10	1=100
April, 2002	38	37	14	10	1=100
Early April, 2002	44	33	13	9	1=100
December, 2001	31	40	19	9	1=100
Early September, 2001	21	33	25	20	1=100
April, 2001	22	34	24	19	1=100
Mid-October, 2000	30	38	18	13	1=100
Early October, 2000	21	30	27	21	1=100
January, 1997	12	23	29	35	1=100
October, 1996	17	34	26	23	*=100
May, 1988	18	37	34	9	2=100
b. Projections of a record high federal budget deficit this year	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>*=100</b>
c. The impeachment of the Governor of Illinois	<b>21</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>2</sup></b>					
<b>January 2-4, 2009</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1=100</b>
<b>December 12-15, 2008</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1=100</b>
d. Barack Obama's appointments and plans for his administration	<b>30</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>January 2-4, 2009</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>December 12-15, 2008</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>December 5-8, 2008</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>November 21-24, 2008<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>November 14-17, 2008</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>November 7-10, 2008</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>TREND FOR COMPARISON:<sup>4</sup></b>					
January, 2001: <i>G.W. Bush's appointments</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1=100</b>
January, 1993: <i>Clinton's appointments</i>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1=100</b>
e. Reports about the rising unemployment rate	<b>45</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>December 5-8, 2008</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>November 7-10, 2008</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>*=100</b>
<b>June 6-9, 2008</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>*=100</b>
f. Preparations for Barack Obama's inauguration	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1=100</b>

<sup>2</sup> For January 2-4, 2009 the item was listed as "The Governor of Illinois appointing someone to fill Obama's Senate seat while under investigation for corruption." For December 12-15, 2008 the item was listed as "The arrest of the Illinois Governor on corruption charges associated with Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat."

<sup>3</sup> For November 7-10, 2008 through November 21-24, 2008 the item was listed as: "Plans for the new Obama administration."

<sup>4</sup> January, 2001 asked about: "George W. Bush's cabinet choices and other high level appointments." January, 1993 asked about "Bill Clinton's cabinet choices and other high level appointments."

Q.3 Which ONE of the stories I just mentioned have you followed most closely, or is there another story you've been following MORE closely? **[DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.]**

- 24 The conflict between the Israeli military and Hama forces in Gaza
- 22 Reports about the rising unemployment rate
- 12 Barack Obama's appointments and plans for his administration
- 9 The impeachment of the Illinois Governor
- 9 Projections of a record high federal budget deficit this year
- 8 Preparations for Barack Obama's inauguration
- 9 Some other story (VOL.)
- 7 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)
- 100

Q.4 From what you've read and heard, can you recall the names of anyone that Barack Obama has chosen for his cabinet or appointed to other high level government posts?

		<b>G.W. Bush</b>	<b>Clinton</b>
		Jan	Jan
		<u>2001</u>	<u>1993</u>
65	Yes	43	21
<u>35</u>	No/Don't Know/No Answer	<u>57</u>	<u>79</u>
100		100	100

**[IF YES, ASK:]** Which names can you recall?  
**[DO NOT READ LIST. RECORD SINGLE MENTION ON FIRST SCREEN, SECOND SCREEN AND THIRD SCREEN IF NECESSARY. IF NECESSARY RECORD MULTIPLE MENTIONS ON FOURTH SCREEN. DO NOT PROBE FOR MORE THAN ONE MENTION]**

NOTE: Total exceeds 100% because of multiple responses.

		<u>Jan 2001</u>	<u>Jan 1993</u>	
56	Hillary Clinton	33	8	Lloyd Bentsen
14	Leon Panetta	8	4	Ron Brown
12	Bill Richardson	4	4	Warren Christopher
6	Rahm Emanuel	3	3	Les Aspin
4	Robert Gates	3	2	Henry Cisneros
3	Tom Daschle	2	2	Donna Shalala
3	Sanjay Gupta	2	2	Zoe Baird
2	Janet Napolitano	1	1	Bruce Babbitt
2	Joe Biden	1	1	Jesse Brown
1	Eric Holder	1	1	Federico Pena
1	Ken Salazar	*	1	Richard Riley
1	Timothy Geitner	*	1	Robert Reich
1	Susan Rice	*	1	William Espy
1	Eric Shinseki	*	1	Hazel O'Leary
*	Hilda Solis	*	*	Mac McClarty
*	Larry Summers	*	*	Leon Panetta
*	Arne Duncan	*	*	Madeline Albright
*	Ron Kirk	*	*	Jocelyn Elders
*	Tom Vilsack	*	*	Mickey Kantor
3	Other	*	*	Anthony Lake
35	Don't know/No answer		*	Laura Tyson
			*	Clifton Wharton