

Clinton beginning informal talks with congressional Republicans

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25 October 2016

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has begun back-channel discussions with congressional Republican leaders over the shape of a Clinton administration, according to several media reports Monday.

Both CNN and CBS said Clinton has been calling former colleagues among Senate Republicans to discuss her agenda for the first 100 days of a new administration, based on the assumption that she will win the election two weeks from today. The plans under discussion likely include the appointment of Republicans to a number of key positions, including cabinet posts, as well as the nomination of a replacement on the Supreme Court for the deceased ultra-right Justice Antonin Scalia.

Clinton is following in the footsteps of Barack Obama, who signaled the essential continuity between the administration of George W. Bush and his own by retaining Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and naming other Republicans to executive branch positions.

Jeff Zeleny of CNN reported, "I'm told she's been talking to Republican senators, old allies and new, saying that she is willing to work with them and govern." Clinton has told these Republicans that she will be more approachable than Obama, Zeleny said, adding, "She will work with them. She wants to have an open-door policy."

CNN also reported that Clinton "is nearing a final decision on her top advisers in the West Wing, including who she will name as White House chief of staff." The news network cited campaign chairman John Podesta and Ron Klain, former chief of staff to Vice President Al Gore and Vice President Joe Biden, as the leading possibilities.

No spokesmen for either the Clinton campaign or the

congressional Republicans would publicly confirm the talks, with the presidential campaign still underway and the two parties engaged in campaigns for seats in the Senate and House of Representatives. Most media polls now show Clinton holding what is considered an insurmountable lead over Republican Donald Trump.

On Fox News Sunday, longtime Republican campaign strategist Karl Rove effectively declared the presidential contest over, saying that Trump could not overcome his deficit in the polls and noting that Republican Party officials were now focused on defending their majorities in the House and Senate.

Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, appearing on the CBS program "Face the Nation," distanced himself from Trump's repeated declarations that the election was rigged and that he might not accept the outcome if he loses. "Losing by a hundred votes is one thing," Priebus said. "Losing by 100,000 is a different thing. I think we can be reasonable on this issue."

The US Chamber of Commerce and the Senate Leadership Fund, a Republican campaign vehicle, have begun running television commercials urging voters to elect Republican senators and representatives who will act as a check on a President Hillary Clinton, effectively conceding that she will defeat Trump on November 8.

Given the fact that Clinton is the second-most disliked presidential candidate in US history, behind Trump, and that she is running a right-wing campaign focused on winning support from the Republican establishment and disaffected Republican and suburban voters, under conditions of broad and deep social anger against the entire political system, these calculations could yet prove to be premature.

In her campaign appearances, Clinton has begun

more openly engaging in what is cynically described as “managing expectations.” In other words, she is letting it be known that her occasional use of populist rhetoric as a sop to the supporters of Bernie Sanders is not to be taken seriously.

Speaking at a rally in Pittsburgh on the weekend, Clinton said, “I’m not going to pretend that we can just snap our fingers and solve our problems... That doesn’t happen in the real world.”

Several major domestic issues will be on the agenda for the post-election lame duck session of Congress that will take place under Republican control, regardless of the outcome of the voting on November 8. These include the stalled nomination of Merrick Garland to fill the Scalia vacancy on the Supreme Court and spending bills for virtually every federal department.

Even more significant are impending decisions on foreign military intervention. There is mounting discussion by media pundits and in foreign policy journals on the likelihood that Clinton will push for an even more aggressive intervention in Syria, including a potential military confrontation with Russia, the principal backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

One column in Monday’s *Washington Post* asked, “Will Hillary Clinton deliver on her promise to ramp up US involvement in Syria?” The columnist, Josh Rogins, noted that Clinton has been advocating a more aggressive policy and that the Center for American Progress, the liberal think tank run by her campaign chairman Podesta, “last week released a report calling for the use of American air power to protect civilians in Syria.”

The imposition of a “no-fly zone” in Syria, which Clinton has repeatedly proposed, would mean war with both the Syrian government and Russia, according to statements by General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



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