



## Political Wisdom: Daschle Casts Shadow on Obama

Posted By [Sara Murray](#) On February 4, 2009 @ 11:19 am In [Political Perceptions](#), [Sara Murray](#) | [1 Comment](#)

*Here's a summary of the smartest new political analysis on the Web:*  
by **Sara Murray**

**Tom Daschle** may have excused himself as nominee for health and human services secretary, but what's the fallout for President **Barack Obama**?

"An administration that promises special interests will have no influence should have realized that the \$220,000 Tom Daschle received from health care interests may have affected public impressions about how he could perform his job as a regulator of health care. It was Obama who taught us all to be careful about those conflicts during his two-year campaign. By apparently hoping the news stayed buried until the press discovered it, the Obama team operated in the shadows, not in the sunlight," writes [1] [Slate's John Dickerson](#). "Instead, it tried the old Washington wiggle. Aides had the information, didn't release it, and then just tried to manage the fallout. This ensured a new degree of skepticism not only about the Obama team's vetting process but about its judgment and ability to live up to its ethics and transparency standards. This rolling day-by-day set of stories distracted from the administration's own message—Hey, look at Tom Daschle when he didn't have a chauffeur!—and created a pressure that makes it harder to deal with each new problem. This pressure is also what caused **Nancy Killefer** to resign before she could even take the job as administration performance officer."

"So who will own the big portfolio that is health care?" [2] [NBC's First Read](#) wonders. "There is a vacuum now. On the Hill, Senate Finance Committee Chairman **Max Baucus** wants to be at the forefront of the debate, but there are a lot of angry Senate Dems at Baucus this morning (lots of finger-pointing at him today over the Daschle issue). **Ted Kennedy's** own health may prevent him from taking the role he wants to play, but he could pick a partner and go forward. And then there's Obama. Will he use the same model he had created with Daschle — give his health-care person both a cabinet post and a West Wing office? If Obama wants a big-name person to take this issue on, he'll have to offer the same structure. An early front-runner is Kansas Gov. **Kathleen Sebelius**. The idea of a governor, who isn't afraid of the legislative process but isn't a creature of it, may be exactly what the president is looking for."

On to the stimulus package. The item we're fighting about today is the buy American clause and, more specifically, why economists hate it. "The Buy American clause puts short-term political expediency and a narrow set of economic interests ahead of the much broader benefits of free trade to American consumers. It also sets back the cause of international economic cooperation and multilateralism that the new administration was expected to usher in," says [3] [Brookings' Eswar Prasad](#). "Protecting domestic industries from foreign competition has a knee-jerk appeal, but the effort is likely to backfire if it sets off a trade war with other countries. This would mean more jobs lost, higher prices for many goods, and a more prolonged recession."

[4] [The Atlantic's Clive Crook](#) launches his own tirade on it, in which he quotes the Peterson Institute's **Gary Hufbauer** and **Jeff Schott** who conclude, "On balance the Buy American provisions could well cost jobs if other countries emulate US policies or retaliate against them. Most importantly, the Buy American provisions contradict the G-20 commitment not to implement new protectionist measures—a commitment that was designed to forestall a rush of 'beggar-thy-neighbor' policies."

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Article printed from Capital Journal: <http://blogs.wsj.com/capitaljournal>

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[1] [Slate's John Dickerson](http://www.slate.com/id/2210437/): <http://www.slate.com/id/2210437/>

[2] [NBC's First Read](http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2009/02/04/1780138.aspx): <http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2009/02/04/1780138.aspx>

[3] [Brookings' Eswar Prasad](http://www.brookings.edu/interviews/2009/0203_buy_american_prasad.aspx): [http://www.brookings.edu/interviews/2009/0203\\_buy\\_american\\_prasad.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/interviews/2009/0203_buy_american_prasad.aspx)

[4] [The Atlantic's Clive Crook](http://business.theatlantic.com/2009/02/the_reckless_stupidity_of_buy_america.php): [http://business.theatlantic.com/2009/02/the\\_reckless\\_stupidity\\_of\\_buy\\_america.php](http://business.theatlantic.com/2009/02/the_reckless_stupidity_of_buy_america.php)