Research Brief

Who Comes First?

Updated by Sarah Sunderman, Research Assistant/October 2009

On February 17, 2009 the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law by President Obama. As a result of the passage of this Act, significant federal funding was allocated to county governments to carry out local programs and projects. As these projects are completed, counties will want to show their thanks by inviting their federal, state and local elected officials to special dedication ceremonies, ribbon cuttings, and press events. What everyone wants done right is who comes first when all of these dignitaries are present in their official capacity at the local event. This protocol list answers that question. It provides the order of seating, introduction, and speaking for numerous officials and dignitaries that can be used at these and many other county functions.

Department of The Army Protocol Precedence List

as of: April 2003

VIP 1 Code:

1. President of the United States
2. Heads of State/Reigning Royalty

VIP 2 (Four-Star Equivalent) Code:

3. Vice President of the United States
4. Governors In Own State (see #43)
5. Speaker of the House of Representatives
6. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
7. Former Presidents of the United States
8. U.S. Ambassadors, when at post
9. Secretary of State
10. President, UN General Assembly (in session)
11. Secretary General of the United Nations
12. President, UN General Assembly (not in session)
13. Accredited Ambassadors of Foreign Powers
14. Widows of Former Presidents
15. Accredited Foreign Ministers And Envoys
16. Associate Justices of the Supreme Court
17. Retired Chief Justices of the Supreme Court
18. Retired Associate Justices of the Supreme Court
19. Secretary of the Treasury
20. Secretary of Defense
21. The Attorney General
22. Secretary of the Interior
23. Secretary of Agriculture
24. Secretary of Commerce
25. Secretary of Labor
26. Secretary of Health and Human Services
27. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
28. Secretary of Transportation
29. Secretary of Energy
30. Secretary of Education
31. Secretary of Veterans Affairs

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32. Secretary of Homeland Security
33. Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
34. Chief of Staff to the President
35. Director, Office of Management and Budget
36. U.S. Trade Representative
37. Director, National Drug Control Policy
38. Office of Homeland Security
39. U.S. Representative to the United Nations (in session) (see #59)
40. Chairman, Council of Economic Advisors
41. President Pro Tempore of the Senate
42. United States Senators (by seniority; when equal, by alpha)
43. Former United States Senators (by date of retirement)
44. Governors when not in own state (by state date of entry; when equal, by alpha) (See #4)
45. Acting Heads of Cabinet Level Departments
46. Former Vice Presidents of the United States
47. United States House of Representatives (by seniority; when equal, by alpha)
48. Former Congressmen (by date of retirement)
49. District of Columbia Delegate to the House of Representatives
50. Guam Delegate to the House of Representatives
51. U.S. Virgin Islands Delegate to the House of Representatives
52. American Samoa Delegate to the House of Representatives
53. Resident Commissioner From Puerto Rico
54. Deputy Secretaries and Under Secretaries (when Deputy Secretary equivalent) of the Executive Departments (number-two position)
55. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
56. Assistants and Counsel to the President
57. Charges D'affaires of Foreign Powers
58. Former Secretaries of State
59. Former Members of the President's Cabinet
60. U.S. Representative to the United Nations (not in session) (see #38)
61. Director, Central Intelligence Agency
62. Solicitor General



63. Administrator, Agency for International Development
64. Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
65. Director, U.S. Information Agency
66. Undersecretaries of State and Counsels
67. Undersecretaries of the Executive Departments (number-three position)
68. U.S. Ambassadors at Large
69. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition (for acquisition matters only) (see #77)
70. Secretary of the Army, Navy, Air Force
71. Postmaster General
72. Chairman, Federal Reserve System
73. Chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission
74. Chairman, Council on Environmental Quality
75. Former Secretaries of the Services
76. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
77. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology (see #69), for Policy, Dod Comptroller/Chief Financial Officer, for Personnel and Readiness, for Intelligence
78. Retired Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
79. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
80. Retired Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
81. Chiefs of Services And Commandant of the U. S. Coast Guard (see note 1)
82. Retired Chiefs of Services (4 Star Rank) (see note 1)
83. Combatant Commanders (see note 2)
84. Retired Combatant Commanders (see note 2)
85. Director, White House Military Office
86. Generals of the Army, Fleet Admirals, Generals of the Air Force
87. Lieutenant Governors and Acting Governors
88. Foreign Non-Accredited Persons of Ambassador Rank
89. Secretary General, Organization of American States
90. Chairman, Permanent Council of the Organization of American States
91. Heads of International Organizations (NATO, SEATO, etc.)



92. Administrator, General Services Administration
93. Administrator, NASA
94. Administrator, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
95. Chairman, Merit Systems Protection Board
96. Director, Office of Personnel Management
97. AdminisTrator, Federal Aviation Administration
98. Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission
99. Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission
100. Director of Action
101. Director of the Peace Corps
102. U.S. Ambassadors on official visits in D.C.
103. Chief of Protocol, Department of State
104. U.S. Ambassadors on Official Visits in the U.S. Outside the District of Columbia
105. State Secretary of State (in own state)

VIP 3 (Four-Star Equivalent) Code:

106. Judges, U.S. Court of Appeals, Federal District
107. Judges, U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Affairs
108. Judges, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. District
109. Cardinals
110. Governor of Guam
111. Governor of U.S. Virgin Islands
112. Chief/Associate Judges of a State Supreme Court



113. Mayors of Major Cities (in own city) (see #179) (cities with a population of one million or more)
114. Mayor of District of Columbia
115. Deputy Director, Central Intelligence Agency
116. Deputy Administrator, Agency for International Development
117. Deputy Director, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
118. Deputy Director, U.S. Information Agency
119. Deputy Administrator, General Services Administration
120. Deputy Administrator, NASA
121. Deputy Director, Office of Personnel Management
122. Deputy Director of Action
123. Deputy Director of the Peace Corps
124. Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
125. Deputy Assistants to the President
126. U.S. Charge d'affaires
127. Attorney General of a State
128. Principal Deputy Under Secretary Of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics/ Under Secretary Of Defense for Acquisition and Technology
129. Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness
130. Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
131. Principle Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
132. Director, Defense Research and Engineering
133. Assistant Secretaries of the Executive Departments, General Counsel, Inspector General, (see note 1); Director, DOD Operational Testing and Evaluation
134. Assistant Secretary General, Organization of American States
135. Assistant Administrator, Agency for International Development
136. Comptroller General of the U.S.
137. Judges, United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces
138. Members, Council of Economic Advisors
139. Active or Designate U.S. Ambassadors
140. Archbishops
141. Under Secretaries of the Army, Navy, And Air Force
142. Ministers of Career Rank when in the U.S.
143. Permanent Representatives to the Organization of American States
144. Vice Chiefs of Services, Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard (see note 1)
145. Former Vice Chiefs of Services (by date of retirement)
146. Assistant Secretaries of the Services (by date of appointment) and Service General Counsels (see note 6)
147. Generals and Admirals (4-Star Rank)
148. Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs
149. 149. Retired General And Admirals (4-Star Rank)
150. Director, Selective Service System
151. Chief of Staff Secretary of Defense
152. Assistant Chief of Staff Secretary of Defense
153. The Special Asst to the Sec/Depsec of Defense
154. Assistants to the Secretary of Defense (see note 3)
155. The Executive Assistant to the Secdef
156. The Executive Assistant to the Depsecdef
157. Director, OSD Administration and Management
158. Director, OSD Program Analysis and Evaluation
159. Director of Net Assessment

160. Director, Force Transformation
161. Principle Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Comptroller/Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Management Reform
162. Principle Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence
163. Defense Advisor U.S. Mission NATO, Secretary of Defense Representative to Europe
164. Chairman of the Defense Policy Advisory Committee, Defense Science Board and the Reserve Forces Policy Board (see note 3)

VIP 4 (Three-Star Equivalent) Code:

165. Directors of Defense Agencies (DLA, DMA, NSA, DCA; DARPA; Other DOD Agencies) (see note 4)
166. Deputy Under Secretaries of Defense (non-statutory) (see note 3); Deputy Director of Defense, R&E; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense; Principal Deputy General Counsel (DOD); Deputy Inspector General (DOD); Director of Defense Procurement; Director, Small and Disadvantaged Business
167. Administrative Assistants of the Army, Navy, Air Force; Director of the Army Staff; Service Senior Enlisted Advisors (see note 5)
168. Former Service Senior Enlisted Advisors (see note 5)
169. Treasurer, Comptroller or Auditor of a state
170. Special Assistants to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force
171. Lieutenant Generals and Vice Admirals
172. Retired Lieutenant Generals and Vice Admirals
173. President of the Senate of a State
174. State Senators (in their own state)
175. Members, Defense Science Board
176. Chairman, American Red Cross
177. Bishops of Washington
178. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Principal Deputy General Counsels of the Army, Navy and Air Force



179. Permanent Observers to the organization of American States
180. Former U.S. Ambassadors
181. Civilian Aides to the Secretary of the Army
182. Mayors of Cities (in own city) (see #112) (populations of less than one million)
183. Speaker of the House of Representatives, Delegates or Assembly of a state
184. Treasurer of the U.S.
185. Director of the Mint
186. Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
187. Chairman, United Services organization, Inc.
188. Director, National Institute of Standards and Technology
189. Librarian of Congress
190. Vice Chairman and Board of Governors, Federal Reserve System
191. State Representative, Assemblyman, or Delegate
192. Chairman, D.C. Council



193. County Judges, District Court Judge (county)
194. Deputy Chief of Protocol, Dept of State
195. Special Assistants to the President
196. Commissioner, U.S. Customs Service
197. Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service
198. Deputy Asst Secretaries of Defense; (see note 3) Deputy General Counsels (DOD); Assistant IG (DOD); Deputy Comptrollers (DOD); Secdef Reps to International Negotiations
199. Deputy Undersecretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force; Army Auditor General (by date of appointment)
200. Deputy Defense Advisor, U.S. Mission NATO
201. Members, Secretary of Defense Boards (Defense Policy Advisory Committee; Defense Science Board; and Reserve Forces Policy Board)
202. Counselors of Embassies
203. Consuls General of Foreign Powers (legations)
204. Ses Members (PC 4)
205. Chairman, Board of Contract Appeals (CA-1)

VIP 5 (Two-Star Equivalent) Code:

206. Major Generals and Rear Admirals (upper half)
207. Retired Major Generals/Rear Admirals (upper half)
208. Surgeon General; Deputy Surgeon General of the U.S.
209. Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency
210. Deputy Assistant Secretaries and Deputy General Counsels of the Army, Navy and Air Force (by date of appointment)
211. City Managers
212. OSD Historian
213. State Chair, National Committee for Employer Support of the National Guard and Reserve
214. United States Attorneys
215. District Attorneys
216. County Sheriffs
217. Board President and County Commissioners
218. SES Members (PC 5)
219. Vice Chariman, Board of Contract Appeals (CA-2)

220. Congressional Staffers
221. USAR Ambassadors

VIP 6 (One-Star Equivalent) Code:

222. Brigadier Generals and Rear Admirals (Lower Half)
223. Retired Bg's and Rear Admirals (Lower Half)
224. County Clerks
225. City Council Members
226. Assistant Surgeon General (Public Health Svc)
227. U.S. Consuls General
228. Assistant Chiefs of Protocol, Dept of State
229. Secretary of the Senate
230. Doorkeeper of the House
231. Chaplain of the Senate
232. Indorsing Agents for Military Chaplains
233. Assistant Deputy Under Secretaries of Defense and Principal Directors
234. City Attorneys
235. SES Members (PC 6)
236. Scientific and Professional (SP); Senior Level (Sl) (note 6) Members, Board of Contract Appeals (CA-3); Administrative Law Judges (AL)

VIP 7 Code:

237. Colonels; Captains (USN/USCG); GS-15; U.S.Consuls, Medical Director (Public Health SVC)
238. Justices of the Peace
239. City Clerks

VIP 8 (Not Vip-Ranked) Code:

240. GS-14
241. Lieutenant Colonels; Commanders; GS-13
242. Majors; Lieutenant Commanders; GS-12
243. GS-11
244. Captains; Lieutenants (USN/USCG); GS-10; U.S. Vice-Consuls
245. First Lieutenants, Lieutenants Junior Grade; GS-9
246. GS-8
247. Second Lieutenants; Ensigns; GS-7
248. Warrant Officers (by grade)
249. Command Sergeants Major; Sergeants Major; Master Chief Petty Officers; Chief Master Sergeants; Master Gunnery Sergeants
250. Other Non-Commissioned Officers, civilians by rank

Department of the Army Protocol Precedence List

as of: June 1996

Notes:

1. Commanders-in-Chief/Retired Commanders-in-Chief, CINCs: At Multi or Joint service events
2. The Director of the Army Staff, Sergeant Major of the Army, and other service equivalents: With Precedence over all other LTG's. Outside the NCR, the DAS is ranked with LTG's and the SMA
3. SES precedence is established by position held. SES pay does not affect precedence. For those, the SES Office at DSN 227-3549. For non-Army SES members, contact the member's agency of employment.



4. FORMER and RETIRED officials are normally placed with BUT after the actively serving officials Example, Presidents of the United States and Retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court are listed means that each official is placed ahead of his or her predecessor. There may be reason to do it, but contact the Department that handles Former Presidents. DOD Regulation 4515.13R, para. 2-4W, defines "retired."

5. STATE and LOCAL officials are difficult to rank. There are no fixed rules, but McCaffree says consider the purpose of the function, the level of all guests, and any political significance."

6. Order Of Precedence – Armed Forces. (Title 10, United States Code 113b; DOD Directory

   Cadets, US Military Academy
   Midshipman, US Naval Academy
   Cadets, US Air Force Academy
   Cadets, Coast Guard Academy
   Midshipman, US Merchant Marine Academy
   United States Army
   United States Marine Corps
   United States Navy
   United States Air Force
   United States Coast Guard
   Army National Guard of the United States
   Army Reserve
   Marine Corps Reserve
   Naval Reserve
   Air National Guard of the United States
   Air Force Reserve
   Coast Guard Reserve
   Other training organizations of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard in that order

   Provided that during any period when the United States Coast Guard shall operate as part of the National Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve shall take precedence after the Midshipman, United States Navy



7. SOURCES for the Precedence List. This precedence list is based on the previous edition dated Protocol: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official and Social Usage, Revised Edition 1985, by Oretha D. Swartz. Precedence Lists are inherently "unofficial" and subject to change.

About the National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,068 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit *www.naco.org*.

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