



The Life Cycle of a Gubernatorial Administration

Just as each governor is different, each year of a governor's administration is different too. There are some general patterns in the life cycle of a gubernatorial administration that pose very special challenges.

The First Term

The architecture for the first term should be sketched during the transition into office and outlined in the inaugural and first state-of-the-state addresses. Although the governor's agenda and team may be adjusted during the course of the term, the foundation is shaped and laid out at the very beginning.

- The **first year** is a time for "**building**" – of the agenda, the team, and the relationships needed to make things happen. These efforts don't happen by chance. And the learning curve may be steep.
- The **second year** is a time for "**solidifying**" – the agenda, team, and relationships. All typically need to be fine-tuned, based on major lessons learned.
- The **critical third year** is a time for "**scoring**" – major results from program initiatives. Wins small and large hopefully will be gained in the first and second years. But the third year is critical for completing big wins before attention both externally and internally is diverted to reelection in the fourth year.
- The **fourth year** is a time for "**governing while running**" – the dual challenge of doing what you were elected to do under the first-term contract while seeking to renew that contract for a second term. The political dynamics can and must not divert good governance.

The Second Term

The second term is distinctly different than the first in its challenges, focus, and end results. If the end result of a first term is reelection, the end result of a second term (for those term-limited) cumulatively is legacy. The architecture for the second term may be drawn in what some coin as the "silent transition."

- The **fifth year** is a time for "**reenergizing and rebuilding**" – of the agenda, the team, and relationships. The end of a successful campaign should not be a letdown, and the start of a new term requires new energy and often rebuilding.
- The **sixth year** is a time for "**refocusing on legacy**" – that for which the governor ultimately will be remembered most. Ideally, the governor's overall agenda should be limited to a very few major themes and indelibly communicated from the very start of the administration. If not revisited and refocused by the end of the sixth year, the odds of achieving a desired legacy are diminished.
- The **seventh year** is a time for "**institutionalizing initiatives and programs**" – where the structure, resources, and base of support have been built to increase the odds that major initiatives and programs can continue beyond this administration. That is much easier said than done. And what can be done should be done before the final year.
- The **final year** is a time for "**finishing strong, smoothing transition, and preparing for life after the governorship**" – a mouthful for coining a phrase and a handful for those attempting to carry it out. This may be the most important year of the life cycle and likely will be the one most remembered about the governor's legacy.