

Clinton's next term will emphasize cooperation

By Terence Hunt
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Clinton sails into a second term that is distinctly different from the first. His initial task: Shake up his administration, perhaps with a Republican or two in his Cabinet. Then, try to build momentum for a modest agenda built around limited tax cuts.

Once again, Clinton's reach will be limited by divided government, with Republicans holding control of the Senate and fighting to keep the House, as well.

Four years ago, Clinton promised an explosive opening to his presidency, an action-packed first 100 days. It was a disaster, marred by controversies over gays in the military, embarrassing appointments and a focus on liberal abortion policies.

This time, Clinton is not trying to bring sweeping change to Washington. His agenda is limited, restrained by budget problems and the more conservative mood of voters.

"Both the president and the Republicans felt obliged to move toward the center," said Brookings Institution presidential scholar Thomas Mann. "The public sent a signal and they listened."

"The American people have been closely divided," Clinton said in his victory speech. Congress will be divided too, whatever the final vote margins, the president said. He said voters "are sending us a message: work to-

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gether, meet our challenges, put aside the politics of division and build America's community together."

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., read the message of divided government differently. He said voters wanted to make sure that the president "doesn't return to the old Bill Clinton of big government and big taxes."

There was no mandate in the election for big change. Clinton did not seek one. The president and Congress seem inclined toward more gradual problem-solving. Clinton will move swiftly to make a gesture of bipartisanship toward Republicans disappointed over Bob Dole's overwhelming defeat.

A Cabinet reshuffling is afoot, with Defense Secretary William Perry, Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary said to be ready to leave. Clinton might find room for a GOP official high in his administration — something he considered but rejected four years ago.

"The message for his agenda is that he has to be bipartisan," said Dick Morris, Clinton's former political strategist who resigned in a sex scandal. "He has to form a national government, not a Democratic government. He needs to reach out to Republicans, put some in his Cabinet and bring the legislative leaders of both parties

into his planning.

"That way," Morris said, "he can use the Republicans to avoid being captured by the left wing of his own party."

One possibility: Ask Dole to head a bipartisan commission charged with finding a way to keep Medicare from going bankrupt.

In Congress, a top priority will be campaign finance reform. Both sides claim they want changes, but it will be an explosive issue.

Angry Republicans want to embarrass Clinton with investigations of the Democrats' questionable fund-raising among foreign donors. The administration is ready to accuse Republicans of foot-dragging if they balk at legislation to ban political action committee contributions to all federal candidates and end unlimited "soft money" donations to political parties.

Even with impressive victories in Republican states such as Florida, Clinton cannot claim a mandate to take big steps. There was no burning issue in the campaign, no single problem that troubled the nation — as the sagging economy did four years ago.

Now, with America at peace and the economy growing, the message of the election was: slow and steady as she goes.

The future holds no grand schemes like the massive health insurance program that Clinton attempted in his first term, or the fiery Republican revolution that the GOP promised when it captured control of Congress.

The president's agenda is built around modest proposals, including tax breaks to send people to college, help them buy their first homes and encourage employers to hire welfare recipients.

Still, the remnants of House Speaker Newt Gingrich's agenda remain the blueprint for the future as Clinton and Congress struggle to balance the budget by the year 2002, reform Medicare and Medicaid and cut taxes.

Of course, Clinton and the Republicans have different ideas about how to achieve each goal.

"It's not going to be grand initiatives," Mann said. "It's going to be a series of things. Clinton needs to set a tone at the outset that will be conducive to bipartisanship. It's going to be tough because the Republicans are circling and they sense he is vulnerable on ethical matters."

Clinton's first move will be "to reach out the hand of bipartisanship — relatively soon" to Congress, said senior adviser George Stephanopoulos. "I think the president has shown he can work with a Republican Congress."

Even in the heat of the campaign, Clinton and Congress found it was in their mutual self interest to get some things done, such as increasing the minimum wage, overhauling welfare and guaranteeing that workers can carry health insurance from job to job.

Terence Hunt has covered the Reagan, Bush and Clinton presidencies for The Associated Press.

ELECTION '96 NOTEBOOK

Minimum wage increase passing

Minimum wage will be a little less minimum in 1997.

Lane County voters in Tuesday's elections came out in favor of increasing the state's minimum wage from \$4.75 to \$6.50 an hour over a three-year period.

The transition between the two wages will begin in 1997, when the wage will increase to \$5.50 an hour. In 1998 the wage will rise to \$6 an hour, and in 1999 the measure will be fully implemented at \$6.50 an hour.

As of 11:30 election night, 62.9 percent of Lane County voters were in favor, and 37 percent were opposed to the measure.

Cathie Hoeckele of Teamsters Local 206 said the measure matches a long-felt need.

"Oregon needs to raise the minimum wage because I think it is long over due for a raise. Households trying to cut it with making \$4.75 an hour can't make it," she said.

Opponents of the measure, however, said the passage of Measure 36 will not only increase the minimum wage, but will also increase the prices of goods and services.

"It won't hurt our economy because the increases are over a three-year period," Hoeckele said. "It's a gradual process."

—Jennifer Carter

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