

Scaramucci out of White House job as John Kelly takes charge

WASHINGTON (AP) — Anthony Scaramucci is out as White House communications director after just 11 days on the job — and just hours after former Gen. John Kelly took over as President Donald Trump's new chief of staff.

Hoping to turn the page on a tumultuous opening chapter to his presidency, Trump had insisted earlier Monday that there was "no chaos" in his White House as he swore in the retired Marine general as his second chief of staff.

Not long after, Scaramucci, who shocked many with a profane outburst last week against then-chief of staff Reince Priebus, was gone.

In the words of the White House announcement, he was leaving because he "felt it was best to give Chief of Staff John Kelly a clean slate and the ability to build his own team." The three-sentence release concluded, "We wish him all the best."

The statement about Scaramucci's departure used the same "clean slate" language that departing press secretary Sean Spicer used to describe his reason for resigning on July 21 — the day Trump brought Scaramucci aboard.

Spicer was at the White House on Monday, saying he was assisting with the communications transitions.

As the Scaramucci news spread, Kelly was in the East Room smiling and taking pictures with guests who were gathering for a Medal of Honor presentation.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump felt that Scaramucci's profanity-laced comments against Priebus "were inappropriate for a person in that position" of White House communications director. The president had not publicly expressed disapproval of those comments in the days after they became public.

Sanders added that Kelly has "the full authority to operate within the White House and that all staff will report to him," a change from Priebus' tenure.

Earlier, in an Oval Office ceremony, Trump predicted Kelly, who previously served as Homeland Security chief, would do a "spectacular job." And the president chose to highlight the rising stock market and positive jobs outlook rather than talk about how things might need to change in his White House under Kelly.

Trump on Friday ousted Priebus as chief of staff and turned to Kelly, who he hopes will bring military discipline to an administration weighed down by a stalled legislative agenda, infighting among West Wing aides and a stack of investigations.

Scaramucci's brief tenure shoved internal White House disputes into the



In this July 25 photo, White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci speaks to members of the media at the White House in Washington. Scaramucci is out as White House communications director after just 11 days on the job.

Sanders says President was 'making a joke' about police brutality

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House defended President Donald Trump's recent remarks that police shouldn't be too nice when transporting suspects, saying Monday that the president was "making a joke."

On a visit to Long Island, New York, last week, Trump implored police officers, "Please don't be too nice." He said some officers are too courteous to suspected criminals when arresting them.

"Like when you guys put somebody in the car, and you're protecting their head, you know, the way you put your hand over" their head, he said, putting his hand above his head for emphasis. "I said, 'You can take the hand away, OK?'"

His remarks prompted critics to accuse the president of encouraging police brutality.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Monday, "I believe he was making a joke at the time."

open. In media interviews, he trashed Priebus as a "leaker" and senior White House aide Steve Bannon as a self-promoter. One of Scaramucci's first — and it turns out only — acts was to force out a communications aide seen as loyal to Priebus.

Spicer, Priebus and Bannon had all objected to Trump's decision to hire Scaramucci, who would have reported directly to the president.

While Trump is looking for a reset, he pushed back against criticism of his administration with this tweet: "Highest Stock Market EVER, best economic numbers in years, unemployment lowest in 17 years, wages raising, border secure, S.C.: No WH chaos!"

In fact, economic growth averaged 2 percent in the first half of this year, a pace Trump railed against as a candidate and promised to lift to 3 percent. The stock market first hit a record under President Barack Obama

and has kept growing. The unemployment rate, too, started to decline on Obama's watch. And wage gains have been weak.

Trump on Monday convened his first Cabinet meeting with Kelly at his side, telling his team it is "doing incredibly well" and "starting from a really good base." On how he would deal with rising tensions with North Korea, Trump said only: "It will be handled."

Seated across from Trump was Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has stayed on the job while Trump has publicly savaged him in interviews and on social media.

Kelly's success in a chaotic White House will depend on how much authority he is granted and whether Trump's dueling aides will put aside their rivalries to work together. Also unclear is whether a new chief of staff will have any influence over the president's social media histrionics.

Tax plan has aggressive timeline but no details

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration started its public push Monday to overhaul taxes but, just as with health care, the White House lacks a detailed plan to promote to voters.

What it has, instead, is an aggressive deadline.

The White House hopes to have the House pass a tax overhaul in October that the Senate could then approve in November, said Marc Short, the White House director of legislative affairs. Under this plan, President Donald Trump would travel the country to rally support for the intended tax cuts, while conservative activists and business groups act as valuable allies to encourage and pressure Congress into clearing the first major tax code rewrite since 1986.

Short said the strategy comes from lessons learned in the troubled attempts to repeal and replace the 2010 health insurance law signed by President Barack Obama, an ongoing frustration for Trump.

"In the health care battle, there was not an organized effort to bring on board a lot of the conservative grass-roots organizations in support," he said at a panel at the Newseum. "But there has been in tax reform."

The panel was sponsored by Americans for Prosperity and Freedom Partners, two conservative groups supported by billionaire industrialists Charles and David Koch. Americans for Prosperity is having its state chapters call lawmakers this summer to encourage support for the overhaul. Separately, the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs, is sponsoring a multimillion-dollar radio and TV ad campaign.

The outreach is occurring even though



President Donald Trump speaks during a cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Monday in Washington.

key elements of the tax overhaul are still unknown. Trump and Republican lawmakers agree on broad contours such as the importance of a simpler tax code, a lower corporate rate and financial relief for the middle class, but the details of an overhaul remain murky.

The Trump administration released a one-page set of goals in April, followed by a joint statement last week with congressional leaders.

As of now, the administration can't say for sure if the tax cuts would increase the budget deficit. It can't say how large of a break a typical taxpayer would receive. It can't say how it would prevent wealthy individuals from setting up tax shelters to take advantage of a reduced corporate rate. And while the White House has pushed to reduce the top corporate tax rate to 15 percent from 35 percent, officials can't say if the rate will end up being that low in the plan.

Each of these unknowns could thwart a tax overhaul. The Trump administration has said it would remove deductions in order to lower rates, but those deductions generally have supporters who will fight to preserve them. House Republicans

already dropped plans for an import-based tax system to help lower national rates after pushback by retailers and groups such as Americans for Prosperity.

Despite those uncertainties, the administration says the effort has universal support from Republican lawmakers.

"We are now in what I would say is a 100 percent coherent place," Gary Cohn, the president's top economics aide, said Monday at a White House meeting. "We have total agreement on major, major issues."

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at Monday's news briefing that the administration is "working hand and glove" with congressional committees on tax overhaul, but she did not say whether the White House would support whatever measure comes out of the committees.

Tax experts say the administration has raised expectations of a tax overhaul without providing much of a roadmap for how it can happen, possibly setting voters and companies up for disappointment if the tax cuts prove to be modest or the overhaul leads to higher taxes for some.

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