

Nov 04, 2016 by **Mark Dillen**

## **Plouffe, He's Back** <sup>[1]</sup>

The Obama Administration is back to practicing public diplomacy — with the American public. Stung by the loss in last week's election in Massachusetts, the White House is bringing back public outreach specialist David Plouffe, the mild-mannered star of the Obama election campaign. Plouffe had stepped back from politics after the election to write a book on the campaign. Now it appears the White House needs Plouffe's grassroots/Internet organizing skills more than ever.

As Plouffe put it today in his first email to Obama's net-roots followers since the end of the campaign, "We've hit some serious bumps in the road recently in our march toward change. We always knew it would be difficult, but this past week has definitely been a hard one, for all of us."

Besides the Massachusetts debacle, Plouffe must have in mind the Supreme Court's sweeping decision last week on corporations and campaign finance. That decision appears to allow unlimited corporate contributions to individual election campaigns — beginning immediately. McCain-Feingold limitations are out the window, and the grassroots, small-donations-by-individuals-via-the-Internet approach to campaigning could be made irrelevant.

Suddenly, the United States is faced with speculation about a new political dynamic in Washington — especially on Capitol Hill — as well as new ground rules for how one gets elected. If Plouffe can improve White House communication with the American public, he may not only rescue the White House's political agenda, but also help restore faith that it is citizens, not corporations, that decide elections.

Plouffe's first task comes Wednesday with President Obama's State of the Union address, which Plouffe will introduce via conference call to thousands of groups of Obama's erstwhile campaign volunteers across the country. It is, as Plouffe says, a "pivotal moment." It's hard to quarrel with that assessment.

*Published in Foreign Policy Association's Blog: "Public Diplomacy: The World Affairs Blog Network", co-hosted by the USC Center on Public Diplomacy.*

---