

**Proposal for the 2005 William J. Clinton Conference
at Hofstra University**

“The White House Chief of Staff in the Clinton Years”

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Proposal

The Clinton administration began with great hope and optimism in 1993 as the first baby-boomer president was sworn into office. Some of that hope began to fade as the Clinton administration became embroiled in a series of embarrassing and avoidable mishaps beginning with the failed Zoe Baird appointment and continuing through the travel-gate and file-gate episodes. The youthful exuberance of the Clinton campaign staff, which was such an asset in 1992, gave way to a perception that the White House staff was amateurish and undisciplined. In 1994, Arkansas energy executive Thomas (Mack) McLarty, President Clinton's boyhood friend and his first White House chief of staff, was reassigned as a part of a White House-shakeup and replaced by OMB Director and long-time Washington insider Leon Panetta. Panetta began immediately to restructure the White House and replace the staff with more experienced political operatives. Following the reorganization, the fortunes of the Clinton administration changed for the better despite a crushing defeat for Democrats in the 1994 congressional elections. In 1996, Clinton won an electoral landslide and Panetta retired to private life knowing that he played a significant role in Clinton's securing a second term.