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Subject: WPOST: White House Visitors Log Reflects Obama Agenda

White House visitors log reflects Obama agenda

By Michael D. Shear
Washington Post Staff Writer
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Tens of thousands of people poured through the White House in September, including many who visited as part of organized outreach by the Obama administration to particularly important constituencies, according to visitor logs that were released Wednesday.

The records, made public as part of President Obama's effort to keep his promise of government transparency, include almost 25,000 entries from the computerized visitor logs, primarily covering the last two weeks of September. It was the latest of three such releases, and the first of what are expected to be large-scale monthly reports by the White House.

The growing list of names of White House visitors, which now totals almost 30,000, offers a fresh, if imperfect, window into the efforts of Obama and his staff to use the White House as a tool for bringing key groups together in the historic venue.

Thousands of entries remain somewhat mysterious, offering no explanation for the reason for the visit, and some visits are not disclosed at all, including those of visitors whose known presence at the White House would pose a national security risk.

But for thousands of others, a brief explanation of the reason for the visit has been recorded in the log. There were meetings labeled "African American Clergy briefing" and others describing "Jewish Community Outreach" or "Urban Policy Working Group."

As the president's battle over health-care reform intensified into the fall, dozens of the White House meetings, involving hundreds of the visitors in September, were labeled "Health Care" or "Health care meeting w/FLOTUS," a reference to Michelle Obama, the First Lady of the United States.

Several of the visits involved energy policy, which has become an intense issue for the Obama administration with climate change legislation fighting its way through Congress and difficult treaty negotiations underway with countries around the world. There were meetings labeled "Energy reform meeting" and "Energy reform team" as well as "Energy-oriented summit."

A review of the thousands of names on the list suggests that the vast majority were members of the public who cycled through the White House on public tours.

Many more were members of the administration who work in other parts of the government and

come to the White House for strategy meetings or as part of their regular business. One meeting was labeled as a lunch for chiefs of staff for government agencies.

But the list also highlights the continuing influence of the labor unions: A senior official for the Service Employees International Union, Anna Burger, was one of the most frequent visitors to the president himself.

Microsoft founder Bill Gates met on Sept. 21 with Lawrence H. Summers, the president's chief economic adviser. Gates also met with Obama in the Oval Office on March 25.

Penny Pritzker, a Chicago businesswoman and the top fundraiser for Obama's campaign, has visited the White House 10 times since the administration started, the list shows.

The list includes dozens of corporate leaders, academics and leaders of interest groups. Nan Aron, president of the advocacy organization Alliance for Justice, visited on Sept. 18 for a meeting labeled "meeting -- discussion the judges bill."

There are also a few names *that*, at first glance, seem odd. A Harrison Ford , but not that Harrison Ford, visited on Sept. 23. And a Ty Cobb -- who shares a name with the late, famed baseball player -- is listed as having stopped by on Sept. 16.

The official explanation for such humorous entries is on the White House blog: "Sometimes rather than providing clear information, transparency can have confusing or amusing results."

Asked about Cobb, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said simply, "Baseball fans are always welcome at the White House."

Staff writers Kimberly Kindy and Philip Rucker and political researcher Alice Crites contributed to this report.

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