

All the President's Pens

LISA BROWN [White House Staff Secretary]: I'm not quite sure when it started. We know that President Kennedy and President Johnson each used a number of pens when they were -- when they signed bills and the Clerk believes that it started with either Truman or Roosevelt.

And the practice is that the President uses a number of pens, and then gives the pens to people who worked particularly hard on a bill, who sponsored the bill, who really fought to get it done, or to whom the bill means a great deal.

Four, five, six, seven eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, -- no, there's one more.

This is the most pens that we've ever used. It will be 20 pens today.

He has gotten much better at this. He, in fact, jokes about this, actually, that he's -- at the beginning it was just not -- come naturally, to use a number of pens when you're signing your name, and so -- but he has now gotten very much in the groove.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I've gotten good at this. [LAUGHTER]

Ms. Brown: Today will be interesting, because this is almost twice as many as he's used before.

And he signed off on 20, so I'll just -- just pass it back upstairs (inaudible). All right, two more. Two more pens -- 22.

Since he's a lefty, as you can see, actually, this is done so that somebody who's left-handed, when they sign it, it's facing...

Hey! Do you know what the record is on number of pens used on a bill? We have 22 today.

The President used 40 pens in 1997 to sign the Taxpayer Relief Act. Is that right, Tim? Okay. Thank you! Okay, bye -- great work.

[MALE SPEAKER]: But we don't know if that's a record at all.

Ms. Brown: We don't know, we're -- that was -- Tim just said he'd found that one, so I'll do a Google search and see if we can figure out what the -- what the actual record is, but the -- I bet you that's pretty close.

There it is!

[GROUP OF MEN]: (chanting)

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Today, after almost a century of trying; today after over a year of debate; today, after all the votes have been tallied, health insurance reform becomes law in the United States of America.

[APPLAUSE]