

A Tour of the West Wing in Sign Language

LEAH KATZ HERNANDEZ: This is a tour of the West Wing in sign language. My name is Leah Katz Hernandez. I'm the West Wing receptionist here at the White House.

Since 1902, many world leaders and everyday Americans have entered through these doors. Let's go!

Welcome to the West Wing lobby. This is where I sit as I welcome visitors and guests of the President, the Chief of Staff, the Vice President, and other senior staff in the West Wing.

This area is called the west colonnade, flanked by the columns you see here. It's also called the "45 Second Commute". The President walks from the residence in the White House across the colonnade to the Oval Office.

Behind us is the Rose Garden. This is where important events are hosted such as announcements from the President, bill signings and it's also where the Thanksgiving turkeys are pardoned. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was a daily wheelchair user, which is the reason we have this ramp. Today, the commute from the residence to the West Wing of the White House is accessible to all people with disabilities.

We are now standing in the White House Press Briefing Room. It is named after James S. Brady who became paralyzed while serving President Reagan. You may have noticed the unique shape of the room. The long rectangular space is the former site of a swimming pool built for Franklin D. Roosevelt who used to swim laps as part of his physical therapy. Today, the White House Press Secretary uses this space to interact on a daily basis with members of the White House Press Corps.

This room is named the Cabinet Room because this is where the President holds official meetings with his most senior appointed staff known collectively, of course, as his Cabinet. The room is decorated in a 1940s era design inspired by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's time. Looking around this table, can you tell which chair is reserved for the President? It's easy to spot because it's the only chair that is slightly taller than the rest. So you can always tell where the President will sit.

This is the Roosevelt Room, formerly known as the fish room. At the time, it was decorated in a fish motif including an actual aquarium. It was renamed to honor both Presidents Roosevelt whose portraits hang on the wall behind me: Theodore Roosevelt, the President who built the West Wing, and Franklin D. Roosevelt who renovated it.

Standing here, we are just steps from the President's office. Here we are at the Oval Office, the distinguished office of the President, with the President working here each day. I'm sure you can imagine what goes on inside.

Thank you for coming on this tour with me. I had a great time. Now I've got to get back to work!