

Washington ready for new president

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—Mason Zmijewski loves the word “change.”

“Ask me to pick my favorite word out of the dictionary, and it would be ‘change,’” he said. “I love the change that is coming to my city, to D.C.”

Working as a vendor outside the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in the National Mall, Zmijewski has a great view of the Capitol from his food stand. If he is working Jan. 20, he will have a perfect view of history being made as President-elect Barack Obama takes the oath of office.

Zmijewski is among the thousands of Washington natives treating the presidential inauguration as a national holiday, he said.

“(That) will be a night of all nights, especially in this city,” he said, while a customer buying hot chocolate smiled and nodded his head. “Our city has been the home for Bush and his damn cronies too long. It will be nice to have someone on our side again.”

When Long Island native Jeneva Perkins, a junior in political science at NYU, was in Washington for the weekend, she and her friends looked on with smiles as construction workers assembled the platform outside the Capitol for the inauguration.

“I really hope I can be here for the inauguration,” she said.

Perkins said she hopes her dad will be able to obtain passes through friends at work.

“It will be an emotional night,” she said. “I would be willing to sleep in a tent for a chance to see that.”

On the other side of the city in the Foggy Bottom area, Patrick Minutillo, a sophomore in pre-medicine studies at Georgetown University, said he was excited to soon be living just minutes away from where New York Sen. Hillary Clinton will likely be working. Clinton is expected to accept the position of Secretary of State in the Obama administration.

“Secretly, I had hoped she would win the election,” Minutillo said. “But in the end, Hillary replacing Condoleezza Rice is just as nice as if she were replacing Bush.”

The Obama team has been working feverishly during the past few weeks to fill appointments in the president-elect’s cabinet. Obama selected Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano to lead the Department of Homeland Security and former Senate Majority Leader from South Dakota Tom Dashle to be the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

In historic Dupont Circle, Lambda Rising Bookstore offers customers T-shirts reading, “01.20.09,” signifying President George W. Bush’s last day in office. Lambda Rising is a prominent gay and lesbian shop, said clerk and part-time American University



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The streets around the capital building are closed in preparation for the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama. Thousands of Washington residents are preparing for the inauguration like it is a national holiday.

student Gary Sheefs. He and other bookstore employees have been looking forward to the ousting of Bush for a long time.

The shop struggles to keep the shirts in stock because eager customers and tourists buy them in bulk, he said, most making witty or snide comments about the current commander in chief.

"When he first took office, we thought we would give him a chance and see what he would do—he deserved that at least," he said. "But after the first year, we knew we wanted someone else. We were so desperate that even John McCain would have been better, but thank God it was Obama instead."

Still, even in a Democratic-heavy city such as Washington there are some loyal supporters to Bush who are wary of the incoming president-elect.

Coreen Archibald, a legal secretary from Washington and an ardent supporter of the Republican Party, said Obama has her worried not only about the country but also about Washington.

"This town is liberal enough as it is," she said. "The last thing we need is a president that will split us further away from the country and ruin our chances of becoming an independent state."

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Editor's Note—Jed Layton is reporting from Washington, D.C., through the Hinckley Institute of Politics.

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