“What The Hell’s A Presidency For?” Making Washington Work By Joseph A. Califano, Jr. Is Released By The Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute At Hunter College

(New York, NY, January 9, 2013) – The Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College has released a new publication on the presidential leadership of Lyndon Baines Johnson, titled “What the Hell’s a Presidency For?” Making Washington Work, by Joseph A. Califano, Jr. As the country approaches the Presidential Inauguration and welcomes the 113th Congress, this new work by Washington insider Califano distills lessons that LBJ’s presidency can offer to current and future political leaders at all levels.

Califano’s publication identifies eight qualities of leadership that made Lyndon Johnson so effective. Included among them are knowing how to work with opponents and allies in Congress, a laser focus, a zest for the political process, courage and good timing, and a willingness to deploy the full powers of the presidency. Each is illustrated with textured examples drawn from Califano’s direct observations as part of the Johnson inner circle.

The publication was inspired by a symposium held at Hunter College on March 14-15, 2012 titled, “Revisiting the Great Society: The Role of Government from FDR and LBJ to Today.” Included among the participants was the late Senator George McGovern—perhaps Johnson’s most outspoken critic on the war in Vietnam. At the symposium, one of his last public events, McGovern said: “With the exception of FDR who had four terms in the White House, LBJ was the greatest president of the twentieth century.”

“There are many lessons the LBJ presidency offers to future presidents, and many LBJ learned from Franklin Delano Roosevelt,” says Mr. Califano, a member of the Roosevelt House Advisory Board. “But the willingness to promote dramatic change, risk failure, try and try again, and recognize that the fundamental commitment to social justice must accommodate changing circumstances and situations—call it pragmatic progressivism, I prefer to call it courage—this is a characteristic much needed today and in the future if we are to protect and strengthen our democratic nation.”

This publication from the Hunter College symposium includes a discussion of panels on civil rights, health, and poverty during the Johnson administration. It features personal reflections from Joseph A. Califano, Jr., derived from his deep experience in public life as President Lyndon B. Johnson’s chief advisor for domestic policy and as the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare during the Carter Administration. In 2012, Roosevelt House published a compendium
from the conference which included the keynote addresses by Robert Caro, Michael Beschloss, and Randall Woods.

The publication and full conference proceedings are available online at:

http://roosevelthouse.hunter.cuny.edu/lbjconference2012/

Hard copies are available upon request.

**About Joseph A. Califano, Jr.**
Joseph A. Califano, Jr. has had a distinguished career in public service. After service in the Navy, Mr. Califano joined the Kennedy administration in 1961 and served as General Counsel of the Army and Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. From 1965 to 1969 he served as Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs to President Lyndon Johnson. From 1977 to 1979 he was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Carter administration.

Mr. Califano is the Founder and Chairman Emeritus of CASA Columbia, a research organization that works to translate knowledge about substance use and addiction into policy and practice. Mr. Califano received his Bachelor of Arts degree from The College of the Holy Cross and his LLB from Harvard Law School, magna cum laude. He serves as a member of the Roosevelt House Advisory Board.

**About the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College**
Roosevelt House, an integral part of Hunter College since 1943, re-opened in 2010 as a public policy institute honoring the distinguished legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Its mission is three-fold: to educate students in public policy and human rights, to support faculty research, and to foster creative dialogue. The new institute provides opportunities for students to analyze public policy and experience meaningful civic engagement; for faculty to research, teach, and write about important issues of the day; and for scholarly and public audiences to participate in high-profile lectures, seminars, and conferences.

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