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Chris Lu

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Christopher P. Lu

盧沛寧



Born	June 12, 1966 (age 45) New Jersey
Nationality	United States
<i>Alma mater</i>	Princeton University , Harvard Law School , Woodrow Wilson School
Occupation	Cabinet Secretary , Attorney , General Counsel
Spouse	Kathryn Thomson
Parents	Eileen and Chien-Yang Lu

Christopher P. Lu ([simplified Chinese](#): 卢沛宁; [traditional Chinese](#): 盧沛寧; [pinyin](#): *Lú Pèiníng*; born June 12, 1966) is Assistant to the President and [Cabinet Secretary](#) for [United States President Barack Obama](#). Lu graduated from the [Woodrow Wilson School](#) at [Princeton University](#) and from [Harvard Law School](#), where he was a classmate of Obama's. He served as a litigation attorney for the [Washington, D.C.](#) firm [Sidley Austin](#) before taking his first political position as [Deputy Chief Counsel](#) for [Representative Henry Waxman](#) and the [Democratic](#) staff of the [United States House Government Reform Committee](#).

After serving briefly as an advisor on [Senator John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign](#), Lu came to work in Barack Obama's [U.S. Senate office](#), where he served as legislative director and acting [chief of staff](#). Following Obama's successful [2008 campaign for presidency](#), Lu was appointed executive director of the [Obama-Biden Transition Project](#). When Obama appointed Lu as Cabinet Secretary, [The New York Times](#) described him as "one of the highest-ranking [Asian Americans](#) in the Obama administration".^[1]

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 Early life](#)
- [2 Career](#)
- [3 Barack Obama's Senate office](#)
- [4 Obama presidential administration](#)
- [5 References](#)
- [6 External links](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Early life

Chris Lu was born on June 12, 1966 in [New Jersey](#).^[1] In 1974, his family moved to the Fallsmead neighborhood of [Rockville, Maryland](#),^[2] where he graduated from [Thomas S. Wootton High School](#) in 1984.^[2] Lu is the son of Eileen and Chien-Yang Lu, both of whom were born in [Mainland China](#) and lived in [Taiwan](#) until the 1950s when they emigrated to the [United States](#) to attend college.^[3] Lu's grandfather, [Wang Ren-yuan](#), was the [Minister of Justice](#) of the [Republic of China](#) from 1970 to 1976 and was elected to the first [Legislative Yuan](#) in 1948 to represent [Tianjin](#). Lu said he was heavily influenced by his father, who worked as an electrical engineer but loved literature and history; the two would read biographies of politicians and watch the evening news together.^[4]

Lu attended the [Woodrow Wilson School](#) at [Princeton University](#), where he was the senior news editor of the [Daily Princetonian](#). Lu's ambition for a political career developed at Princeton, particularly during his internship in the [Capitol Hill](#) office of [Senator Charles Mathias](#).^[5] He graduated *magna cum laude* in 1988,^[6] after writing a senior thesis on press coverage of presidential campaigns.^[5] After graduating from Princeton, Lu attended [Harvard Law School](#), where he was one of Barack Obama's classmates from 1988 to 1991.

[\[edit\]](#) Career

After graduating *cum laude* from Harvard in 1991,^[6] Lu started his career as a law clerk to Judge [Robert Cowen](#) in the [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit](#). In 1992, he began working as a litigation attorney at the Washington, D.C. office of [Sidley Austin](#), a large Chicago-based law firm. Barack Obama and his wife, [Michelle](#), also worked at Sidley Austin, in the firm's [Chicago](#) office.^[4]

In 1997, Lu left Sidley Austin and took his first job in the political arena as deputy chief counsel for Representative Henry Waxman and the Democratic staff of the [Oversight and Government Reform Committee](#) of the [House of Representatives](#).^[4] [Phil Schiliro](#), Waxman's chief of staff, had a large part in the decision to hire Lu; the two would work together again later on the Obama administration;^[7] Lu later said he considers Schiliro and [Pete Rouse](#), another future [White House](#) staffer, among his most influential mentors.^[1] During his tenure with the Government Reform Committee, Lu conducted several high-profile investigations, including investigations into campaign fundraising during the [1996 presidential election](#), the [collapse of Enron](#), and substandard nursing home conditions.^[6] Lu also served as special adviser for communications to Senator John Kerry during the [2004 presidential election](#). One of his primary duties there was coordinating the activities of families of [September 11 attack](#) victims supporting the Kerry campaign.^[6]

[\[edit\]](#) Barack Obama's Senate office

After Barack Obama was elected as U.S. Senator of [Illinois](#), Lu joined Obama's office in early 2005 as legislative director. Lu developed a strong admiration for Obama, of whom he said, "With his quick and incisive mind, Obama is the most intelligent person that I have ever met (in the political arena)."^[4] As legislative director, Lu led a 15-person group and was responsible for overseeing the drafting of all legislation and advising Obama on votes and policy decisions.^[6] When weighing difficult votes, Obama had Lu and his other staff members assemble together and argue about the issue in front of him. David Mendell, a [Chicago Tribune](#) reporter and Obama biographer, said Lu was among the "moderate voices in this atmosphere of smart young staffers."^[8] Lu advised Obama to vote in favor of the [Military Commissions Act of 2006](#) because he felt it would have been politically wiser to support it, but Obama ultimately voted against it.^[8]

Lu said of his role as legislative director, "It's one of the most fun jobs in the Senate (but) it's also an incredibly difficult job because you have to know something about any given thing going on in the Senate at the time ... It takes a couple years off your life."^[5] Lu, along with [Robert Gibbs](#) and several other Obama staffers, read Obama's manuscript for [The Audacity of Hope](#) and provided him with several editorial suggestions.^[9]

Lu eventually became acting chief of staff in Obama's Senate office. When Obama announced his [candidacy for president](#) in February 2007, Lu did not move over to the campaign, but remained to continue running Obama's operations in the Senate; Lu said of Obama at that time, "Even while he was running for president, he had a day job [in the Senate]."^[5]

[\[edit\]](#) Obama presidential administration



Lu with Obama in the [Blue Room](#) of the [White House](#)

In May 2008, Obama asked Lu to begin planning for a possible presidential transition.^[10] Obama warned him to tell no one about the nascent operation, even his own wife, so Lu quietly rented a small office in D.C.^[10] and secretly met with people who had worked on previous Democratic presidential transition efforts.^[11] The planning efforts produced policy options on a wide range of topics, compiled names of and began vetting potential political appointees for top jobs, arranged over 100 security clearances, and managed the logistics for expanding the operations after Election Day.^[12]

After Obama's victory, Lu became executive director of the [Obama-Biden Transition Project](#), a position that was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the transition. During the transition period, Lu was in daily contact with [Bush administration](#) officials, managed the \$9 million budget, and negotiated the ground rules for Obama transition representatives to gather information on federal agency operations and programs.^[12]

"My job (at the White House) is the same job I've had all along, which is to keep the trains running on time, and to make sure that on any given day, the White House and the agencies are all moving down the same set of tracks."

Chris Lu^[3]

Obama selected Lu to serve as [Cabinet Secretary](#), making him one of the highest-ranking Asian Americans in the [administration](#), along with [Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke](#) and [Secretary of Energy Steven Chu](#).^[3] At the time of his selection, *New York Times* reporter Michael Falcone wrote, "By now, Mr. Lu knows the president-elect's record better than almost anyone."^[1]

Lu's responsibilities include representing Obama's positions to each of the [Cabinet](#) secretaries and agencies and coordinating a common White House agenda among them.^[1] [Marc Ambinder](#), associate editor of *The Atlantic*, said of Lu, "when agency heads have a problem, or when the White House has a problem with an agency head, Mr. Lu will be the first person who's called, or calls."^[13] Lu's office is in the second floor of the White House's [West Wing](#).^[14]

In 2009, Lu visited [China](#) in July 2009 as part of an official delegation for the Obama administration, along with Locke and Chu. Although his parents were born there, it was the first time Lu had set foot on Chinese soil.^[3] Lu was introduced to Chinese [Premier Wen Jiabao](#), who said upon meeting Lu, "I know the name and also the importance of his position."^[15]

In July 2010, Lu was a member of the official U.S. delegation to the [Shanghai Expo](#), along with former [Secretary of State Madeleine Albright](#).^[16]

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[\[edit\]](#) External links

- [Chris Lu](#) at *WhoRunsGov* at *The Washington Post*
- [Chris Lu](#) collected news and commentary at *The New York Times*