



**Tuesday, January 6, 2009**

# The loyalists

With President Bush to the end, they believe history will view him favorably

By Susan Page  
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — From the first day to the last. They are the loyalists, the handful of aides and advisers who will have worked for George W. Bush from the time he moved into the White House eight years ago until he moves out Jan. 20. After two terms together, they share the camaraderie — and the battle scars — that Education Secretary Margaret Spellings likens to a military unit that has survived a war.

## Cover story

“That common experience in a time and place — it’s kind of a bond,” she says, adding: “You’re with a team.”

Don’t ask them for dispassionate assessments of the president. His job-approval rating may be at rock bottom — just 18% of Americans said in an NBC-*Wall Street Journal* poll last month that they’d miss Bush when he’s gone — but these staffers express confidence their boss will fare better in history’s judgment.

Please see COVER STORY next page ►



USA TODAY photos

**They still believe:** Among administration officials who have been with President Bush the longest are, clockwise from top left, Margaret Spellings, Elaine Chao, Jim Wilkinson and Joshua Bolten.