

Washington Whispers

By Paul Bedard

From 'You're Hired!' to 'You're Elected!'

Dick Cheney, Bill Clinton, and even Les Aspin, the late congressman and Clinton's first Pentagon boss, can take credit for helping make Kelly Perdue, a former Army Ranger, Donald Trump's *Apprentice 2* champ in 2004. And if Perdue follows his gut to run for office, he says, George W. Bush can claim he predicted it first. Why? Bush touted him at a 2004 inauguration concert in Washington and proclaimed: "Next thing you know, the guy will be running for president."

Perdue's story, revealed in an interview and hinted at in the new Regnery Publishing book *Take Command*, is more than just name-dropping. As a Wyoming high schooler, Perdue recalls being wowed by a Cheney speech when the veep was the state's representative. That led to an appointment to West Point, granted by Cheney, and a school internship with Aspin, then chair of the House Armed Services Committee. When Clinton cut the size of the military, Perdue left the Army and eventually made it to *The Apprentice 2*. The Bush twins wooed the new TV star to the inauguration, where he met the prez. Naturally, Perdue caught Potomac fever despite his Trump job and an upcoming Military Channel show: *G.I. Factory*. Is politics calling? Sure, he says, suggesting a race in New York, Kentucky, or Florida, all states where he's lived. "I've definitely considered doing something like that."

