WEST WING, THE (Political Drama)

FIRST TELECAST: September 22, 1999
LAST TELECAST: 
BROADCAST HISTORY: 
  Sep 1999- , NBC Wed 9:00-10:00

CAST:
  President Josiah Bartlet ..................Martin Sheen
  Abigail Bartlet ..........................Stockard Channing
  *Zoey Bartlet ............................Elizabeth Moss
  Chief of Staff Leo McGarry ............John Spencer
  Dep. Chief of Staff Josh Lyman .........Bradley Whitford
  Press Secretary C.J. Cregg ............Allison Janney
  Communications Dir. Toby Ziegler .......Richard Schiff
  Madeline “Mandy” Hampton (1999-2000) ........................................Moira Kelly
  Danny Concannon (1999-2000) .........Timothy Busfield
  Donna Moss ..............................Janel Moloney
  Charlie Young (2000- ) ..................Dulé Hill
  *Delores Landingham (1999-2001) ........Kathryn Joosten
  Margaret ................................NiCole Robinson
  Carol ......................................Melissa Fitzgerald
  *Bonnie ....................................Devika Parikh
  *Vice President John Hoynes ..........Tim Matheson

*Occasional

The majesty and drama of the White House was the setting for this series, which mixed personal stories with political intrigue. Josiah Bartlet was a liberal New Hampshire Democrat who brought to the presidency a JFK-like intensity and single-mindedness of purpose. His intense and loyal staff included Chief of Staff Leo, an experienced operator who was the president’s closest ally and at the center of almost every crisis; Leo’s opinionated deputy Josh, a skilled strategist who sometimes blurted out the truth at inopportune moments; Josh’s sarcastic assistant Donna; Press Secretary C.J., a tall, wired woman who deftly handled the resulting uproars; rumpled Communications Director Toby, whose cynical sense of humor got him through many dicey political situations, and Toby’s deputy Sam, a smooth political operator and ladies’ man. Abigail was the first lady, a doctor who was dedicated to her husband but not afraid to put him in his place; Zoey was their daughter. Others seen frequently in the bustling White House corridors included political consultant Mandy (Josh’s ex-girlfriend), reporter Danny, Bartlet’s devoted secretary Delores, C.J.’s secretary Carol, communications aide Bonnie and unsupportive Vice President Hoynes.

Major stories included an assassination attempt in 2000, which proved to have been aimed not at Bartlet but at his young black personal aide, Charlie; the revelation in 2001 that Bartlet had multiple sclerosis, which he hid until after his renomination and which led to a congressional investigation and charge of a cover-up; and his reelection campaign in 2001-2002 against conservative Gov. Robert Ritchie (James Brolin), which Bartlet won by a landslide.

Though by nature a political animal, Bartlet was not afraid to show his beliefs, as in the premiere when he got into an argument with a contentious group representing the religious right and pointedly showed them the door. The producers denied that this was a slap at Rev. Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, but Bartlet’s liberal leanings were so apparent that wags dubbed the show “The Left Wing.”