THE PRESIDENTS, MORE OR LESS

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In a transdeletion, one or more letters are subtracted from a word and the remaining letters rearranged (if necessary) to form a new word. In a transaddition, one or more letters are added to a word to supply the letter-stock for a new word. The goal in each case is usually to transform one word into another with the fewest possible subtractions or additions of letters. In the February 1998 Word Ways, Darryl Francis offered a list of transdeletions and transadditions of American state-names; in the list below, this idea is applied to the surnames of American presidents. Asterisks denote one-letter transadditions or transdeletions. All words are taken from Webster's Second or Third Editions, or are inferred forms of entries therein (plurals or past tenses). Entries must have no relation to the presidential names (thus, entries such as JOHNSONIAN are not permitted). Are any improvements possible?

WASHINGTON  gnathions*  notwithstanding
ADAMS  dams*  madams*
JEFFERSON  offers  diamonds*
MADISON  domain*  doormen*
MONROE  Romeo*  jackstone
JACKSON  snack  overabundant
VAN BUREN  urbane  narrowish*
HARRISON  sornari*  styler*
TYLER  rely*  polka*
POLK  lop*  royalty*
POLK  royal*  mollifier*
TAYLOR  filler  receipt*
FILLMORE  price*  Nudibranchia
PIERCE  bunch  anonceillo
BUCHANAN  collin*  Jonathanizations
LINCOLN  noons  argent*
JOHNSON  tang*  shaley*
GRANT  ashy*  dragonflies
HAYES  fragile*  urethra*
GARFIELD  hurt  decollectivization
ARTHUR  cleaved  yachtsmanlike
CLEVELAND  nicely  overlightsome
MCKINLEY  overtoe  fatty*
ROOSEVELT  aft*  lowings*
TAFT  lions*  hoarding*
WILSON  daring*  ideologic*
HARDING  oceloid*  overhot*
COOLIDGE  hover*
Other solutions are possible; for example, UNSTANCHABLE is a noncapitalized transaddition of BUCHANAN. Note that JEFFERSON is the only president without a transaddition. Wake up and smell the coffee, you JOE-SNIFFER!

What might be the next name to go on this list? Plausible prospects inclue GEPHARDT, GINGRICH, POWELL and GORE. Of these, GORE seems the most transpositionally interesting, inasmuch as it offers politically-germane alternatives. For instance, some may see Al as an environmental GOER--ERGO, ROE and GROVE might be fitting--whereas others could see him as more of an OGRE, in which case EGO and ROGUE might be apter. Well, we can REGO O'ER this question in 2001 if the need arises!

There are more than thirty one-step transadditions of GORE in Webster's Second and Third, surely more than for any president:

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What two presidents are closest to each other, logologically if not politically? The answer is CLINTON and LINCOLN. One can be transformed to the other by the removal of the letter T and the addition of the letter L, followed by rearrangement of the letters. (The shortest word containing both presidents is CONTROLLING.) This two-step change is nearly equalled by the three-step change between TYLER and TAYLOR. On the other hand, the two least neighborly presidents appear to the TAFT and EISENHOWER—they share no letters, and a total of 14 must be added and subtracted.

I am indebted to the editor for various improvements to the list, and to Darryl Francis for the WASHINGTON examples.