

April 30, 2015

Ron Fournier is after H. Clinton again. That will kick off another day to examine her efforts.

Let's remember what this story is about. Hillary and Bill Clinton want it to be about a "conservative author" who catalogued their conflicts of interest. They want it to be about The New York Times, The Washington Post, and any other media outlets who dare to question the couple's integrity. They want it to be about "Republican overreach."

The media mostly wants it to be about Election Day 2016. We commission polls and hire pundits to parse the winners and losers of each news cycle. We shrug: "Real voters don't care about this story." As if it's not our job to help them understand why these scandals matter.

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She violated government rules designed to protect against corruption and perceptions of corruption that erode the public's trust in government. She has not apologized. She has not made amends: She withholds the email server and continues to accept foreign donations.

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John Fund is asking if the Dems are worried. He ran many of them at the White House Correspondent's dinner.

... But what was striking about last night's dinner was that many people have come to the conclusion that Hillary Clinton's campaign is in deep trouble and she is no longer as inevitable as people once thought. Working reporters who cover her and other Democratic politicians wouldn't go on the record, but you heard the same thing from several of them:

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"How can she possibly distance herself from the Obama administration she served for four years, but whose policies increasingly alienate independent voters she needs?"

That last comment goes to the heart of her problem with Democratic insiders. Publicly, they praise Hillary as a candidate of exceptional experience in government and one who is likely to harvest bushels of votes from people eager to elect the first female president. Privately, they fret about a recent Quinnipiac poll in which 54 percent of Americans say Clinton is not honest or trustworthy. Among independents, that number hits 61 percent. "Candidates distrusted by that many people can win the White House, but it leaves no margin for error or another big scandal," one Democratic former officeholder admitted to me. ...

Chris Cillizza says she had the worst week in Washington.

... Like the semi-scandals of the 1990s and 2000s, none of the pieces was the sort of death blow that could end or even badly hamstring Clinton's presidential candidacy. But taken together, they remind people — even people who are favorably inclined toward the Clinton family — of all the baggage that goes along with electing them to any office.

Remember that when it comes to Hillary Clinton, America already holds two contradictory ideas in its collective head. On the one hand, a majority (62 percent in a recent Quinnipiac University poll) believe she would be a strong leader. On the other, more than half of the public (54 percent in that same poll) believes she is neither "honest" nor "trustworthy."

Hillary Clinton, for playing to type long after you should have known better, you had the worst week in Washington. Congrats, or something.

Glenn Reynolds speculates on winners and losers in this Clinton mess.

... But who benefits from Clinton's troubles now, and who suffers? A few thoughts:

First, this is a shot in the arm for her potential Democratic challengers, who have labored in obscurity. Probably the biggest beneficiary is former Virginia senator James Webb, whose military background and more centrist views could help bring in the white working-class voters that the Democrats are realizing they have alienated during the Obama era. Also helped is Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, though her close resemblance to Clinton (another northeastern Ivy League white woman) and her own strong corporate ties (Warren made money advising asbestos companies how not to pay claims, and is worth many millions) might hurt. Former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley also gets a boost, though he's the probably the longest shot of the three.

On the other hand, Clinton's candidacy is well-established, heavily financed (though that's part of the problem, I guess) and endowed with high name recognition, '90s nostalgia and her husband's formidable political skills. Losing that is a sore blow to the Democratic Party's 2016 hopes.

On the Republican side, Clinton's travails both hurt and help. By making the political establishment look corrupt, they especially help the anti-establishment candidates such as Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Sens. Ted Cruz and Rand Paul. ...

From The Federalist we learn the Clinton Foundation only spent 10 percent of its budget on charitable grants. He wasn't President Pig for nothing.

... If you take a narrower, and more realistic, view of the tax-exempt group's expenditures by excluding obvious overhead expenses and focusing on direct grants to charities and governments, the numbers look much worse. In 2013, for example, only 10 percent of the Clinton Foundation's expenditures were for direct charitable grants. The amount it spent on charitable grants—\$8.8 million—was dwarfed by the \$17.2 million it cumulatively spent on travel, rent, and office supplies. Between 2011 and 2013, the organization spent only 9.9 percent of the \$252 million it collected on direct charitable grants.

While some may claim that the Clinton Foundation does its charity by itself, rather than outsourcing to other organizations in the form of grants, there appears to be little evidence of that activity in 2013. In 2008, for example, the Clinton Foundation spent nearly \$100 million purchasing and distributing medicine and working with its care partners. In 2009, the organization spent \$126 million on pharmaceutical and care partner expenses. By 2011, those activities were virtually non-existent. The group spent nothing on pharmaceutical expenses and only \$1.2 million on care partner expenses. In 2012 and 2013, the Clinton Foundation spent \$0. In just a few short years, the Clinton's primary philanthropic project transitioned from a massive player in global pharmaceutical distribution to a bloated travel agency and conference organizing business that just happened to be tax-exempt.

The Clinton Foundation announced last week that it would be refiling its tax returns for the last five years because it had improperly failed to disclose millions of dollars in donations from foreign sources while Hillary Clinton was serving as Secretary of State.

Jonathan Tobin has more on the Clinton "good works."

... The latest shoe to drop is the report about the way the Clintons became the "gatekeepers" for any company that wanted to do business in Haiti during the reconstruction effort after a devastating earthquake in 2010. By the same set of curious coincidences that led those who profited from the sale of 20 percent of America's uranium reserves to Russia to become donors to the Clinton Global Initiative and sponsors of highly paid speeches by Bill Clinton, a different set of "philanthropists" wound up getting contracts to aid reconstruction and infrastructure work in Haiti also after donating fortunes to the ubiquitous Clinton Foundation. The former president, who was co-chair of a recovery commission, and the State Department facilitated such access. One of the most egregious and embarrassing examples came when a company with little mining experience was granted a gold mining permit. By another astonishing coincidence, Tony Rodham, the secretary of state's brother, was soon named to its board.

In reply to this and the shocking revelations about a Russian state agency acquiring an American uranium mine from Clinton donors, friends of the putative 2016 Democratic presidential candidate can only shrug their shoulders and demand that critics "prove" to a legal certainty that the favors done their benefactors was part of corrupt deal. They're right. There probably isn't a piece of paper lying around in which Bill or Hillary say what it will cost in terms of charitable gifts or honorariums to help potential donors. And if it was ever written in an email, we know that email and the server on which it was recorded have since been erased. ...

Abe Greenwald closes today's look at the Clintons with an effort to understand the mindset of their apologists.

The Clinton Cash scandal has spurred much discussion of the serial misconduct of Bill and Hillary Clinton. But the affair speaks to realities larger and more destructive than the political pathologies of one family. The Clinton Foundation saga marries liberalism's core grandiosity to the impunity of the new high-flying elite and lays bare a class of global VIP forever celebrating its progressive good works while holding the common citizen in contempt.

Progressive grandiosity was born long ago with the socialist impulse to remake the world. It lives on in the liberal expectation of a savior who will set things right. Such political messianism makes it hard for many liberals to find fault with liberal leaders. While conservatives reject perfection and take human defects as given, many liberals see the shortcomings of a Barack Obama or a Hillary Clinton as a threat to their faith.

It's easier, then, for liberals to downplay a progressive politician's record and focus instead on their "meaning." This goes a long way in explaining both the reelection of Obama and the continued support for Hillary, two liberal politicians stuffed to the gills with meaning and shot through with teleological purpose. They're not admired for what they've done but for simply being objects of admiration—and inevitability. ...

... Liberal messianism and elite-worship enjoy a wholly complementary relationship. Progressives expect to cede large realms of their lives to capable leaders who will deliver a fairer world. The Clintons have traded on both their meaning and their unquestioned elite status to earn pardons for a multitude of sins. While the world looked the other way Clinton Cash happened. Both ideas are there in Hillary's campaign message: "Everyday Americans need a champion. I want to be that champion." The Clintons have long thrived in the convergence of these trends. It remains to be seen if they will also be undone by them.

National Journal

The Proof of the Clintons' Wrongdoing

Her campaign and the media are misreading the scandals.

by Ron Fournier

Let's remember what this story is about. Hillary and Bill Clinton want it to be about a "[conservative author](#)" who catalogued their conflicts of interest. They want it to be about [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), and any other media outlets who dare to question the couple's integrity. They want it to be about "[Republican overreach](#)."

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Clinton's crisis-management team makes a big deal of the fact that [Clinton Cash](#) author Peter Schweizer hasn't proved a "quid pro quo." Really? It takes a pretty desperate and cynical campaign to set the bar of acceptable behavior at anything short of bribery.

The Clinton team also points to errors made by news organizations investigating the email and foundation scandals, particularly the work around Schweizer's book. That is their right, but they're nibbling around the edges: The core ingredients of the Clintons' wrongdoing has not been misreported.

Like so many [past scandals](#), these twin issues show the Clintons to be entitled, ethically challenged rule-breakers who believe the ends justify the means. "The best-case scenario is bad enough," [writes](#) liberal columnist Jonathan Chait. "The Clintons have been disorganized and greedy."

The media should not conflate the ethical issues with the campaign "horse race" and election results. A Clinton victory wouldn't necessarily mean voters found her behavior acceptable. They may just find it to be, sadly, standard operating procedure in Washington. They would be right.

Having lost faith in every American institution, some voters also may think modern journalists care more about clicks than conflicts of interest and potential corruption. Are they right about that?

Finally, voters may find the GOP alternatives to Clinton to be just as sleazy or unattractive. Schweizer says he's digging into questionable business practices of potential Clinton rival Jeb Bush.

In this era of zero-sum-gain politics and "[negative partisanship](#)," Hillary Clinton can always hope to be the least-lousy alternative. But that's no way to win the presidency, much less a mandate to lead and transform a nation.

Which reminds me of a nagging question: If, as the White House wants us to believe, President Obama is upset at Clinton for violating his ethics rules, why hasn't he publicly rebuked her? Perhaps he's more concerned about the 2016 elections than good government.

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to know that foreign companies and countries expected something in return for donating to the Clinton foundation rather than the countless other charities not connected to the U.S. presidency.

You don't have to be a lawyer to know the Clintons violated ethics rules.

You don't have to be a historian to know their ethical blind spot has decades-old roots.

You don't have to be a political scientist to know this behavior contributes to the public's [declining trust](#) in its leaders.

But to believe this is just about the actions of a book author, the mainstream media, and the Republicans, it helps to be a Clinton.

National Review

Are Democratic Insiders Starting to Panic about Hillary?

by John Fund

Washington, D.C. — The annual White House Correspondent's Dinner is indeed — as President Obama put it last night — “where Washington celebrates itself.” Little real news is ever made, but Beltway media, politicians, and consultants attend in such large numbers that you can get a sense of the current conventional wisdom.

Cecily Strong, the *Saturday Night Live* comic who followed President Obama on the podium, was so blatantly in Hillary's corner that it was jarring. But what was striking about last night's dinner was that many people have come to the conclusion that Hillary Clinton's campaign is in deep trouble and she is no longer as inevitable as people once thought. Working reporters who cover her and other Democratic politicians wouldn't go on the record, but you heard the same thing from several of them:

“It's not that she's too old — she just can't relate to younger generations.”

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That last comment goes to the heart of her problem with Democratic insiders. Publicly, they praise Hillary as a candidate of exceptional experience in government and one who is likely to harvest bushels of votes from people eager to elect the first female president. Privately, they fret about a recent Quinnipiac poll in which 54 percent of Americans say Clinton is not honest or trustworthy. Among independents, that number hits 61 percent. “Candidates distrusted by that many people can win the White House, but it leaves no margin for error or another big scandal,” one Democratic former officeholder admitted to me.

That's why so many Democrats hope Hillary Clinton will be challenged by a more formidable rival than the former governors or senators who are currently lining up to oppose her: Martin O'Malley, Lincoln Chafee, and Jim Webb. Senator Elizabeth Warren, an economic populist to the left of Hillary, has steadfastly declined to run for president. But each new scandal or Hillary campaign stumble could fuel the pressure for her to enter the race. Most Democratic strategists believe that only a woman could seize the nomination from Mrs. Clinton, given Hillary's name ID and campaign war chest. In 2008, Barack Obama would have had no hope against Hillary, despite his formidable campaign skills, if he hadn't also had a history-making card to play as the first African-American man with a realistic chance of becoming president.

What Democrats really worry about is that no one will beat the Clinton Machine for the Democratic nomination — it will survive and go on to become an inviting target for Republicans in the general-election battle.

Focus groups and polls show that voters are most interested in finding candidates they judge as authentic — leaders who don't play the normal political games. For Hillary Clinton, that represents a challenge. Her campaign is emphasizing her desire to help “everyday” people,

while at the same time the press is starting to reveal the Clinton Foundation as a lucrative slush fund for the Clintons and their friends. In some years, the foundation spends \$500 million, but overhead, salaries, travel, and undisclosed “other” expenses eat up a huge chunk of that, leaving perhaps 15 percent for actual charitable work.

Investigative journalist Peter Schweizer, whose book *Clinton Cash* is due for release on May 5, as well as Pulitzer Prize–winning Jo Becker and and Mike McIntire of the *New York Times*, have raised new questions. Their research points to a disturbing pattern of foreign contributions and enormous speaking fees for Bill Clinton that appear to be timed to coincide with preferential actions the State Department took while Mrs. Clinton was secretary of state.

Hillary Clinton has dismissed the reporting as “distractions and attacks.” But she did find time last week to suddenly call for a truce in what she sees as an increasingly hostile political climate. “I am tired of the mean-spiritedness in politics,” she told voters in Claremont, N.H. “Enough with the attacks and the anger, let’s find answers together and figure out what we’re going to do.”

Hillary Clinton could, of course, put all the concerns about her family foundation and its seedy dealings to rest if she were to release all the e-mails concerning the foundation that were in her private e-mail account — the one she used, in violation of explicit government rules, to conduct government business. But she has already announced that the e-mails she viewed as “private” have been deleted and her server scrubbed. She has yet to answer questions about whether e-mails that concerned the Clinton Foundation during her tenure at the State Department were “private,” in her estimation. Because they are now gone, we will probably never know.

Democrats privately believe that the Clintons can recover from the e-mail and foundation scandals because it’s unlikely reporters will ever find a “smoking gun” that explicitly links foreign donations with public actions. But Democrats also know that other scandals may soon be unearthed. And if they do, not only will Hillary Clinton prove unable to establish herself as an “authentic” candidate, she also will establish herself as a pro at conducting an “authentic” cover-up.

Washington Post

[Who had the worst week in Washington? Hillary Clinton.](#)

by Chris Cillizza

“The past is never dead,” William Faulkner wrote. “It’s not even past.” Faulkner wasn’t writing about Hillary Clinton, but he might as well have been.

The former first lady, senator and secretary of state — who has spent a political career trying to use her immense talent between constant bouts of controversy — woke up to these headlines this past week: “Cash Flowed to Clinton Foundation as Russians Pressed for Control of Uranium Company” ([New York Times](#)); “For Clintons, speech income shows how their wealth is intertwined with charity” ([Washington Post](#)); and “Hillary Clinton struggles to contain media barrage on foreign cash” ([Politico](#)).

At issue are the complicated donation practices of the massive foundation run by Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton. All of the stories touched on questions of quid pro quos — or the appearance of such — tied to whom the Clinton Foundation took money from and why.

Like the semi-scandals of the 1990s and 2000s, none of the pieces was the sort of death blow that could end or even badly hamstring Clinton's presidential candidacy. But taken together, they remind people — even people who are favorably inclined toward the Clinton family — of [all the baggage](#) that goes along with electing them to any office.

Remember that when it comes to Hillary Clinton, America already holds two contradictory ideas in its collective head. On the one hand, a majority (62 percent in a recent Quinnipiac University poll) believe she would be a strong leader. On the other, more than half of the public (54 percent in that same poll) believes she is neither "honest" nor "trustworthy."

Hillary Clinton, for playing to type long after you should have known better, you had the worst week in Washington. Congrats, or something.

USA Today

[Clinton's troubles net winners and losers](#)

Hillary-vs.-Jeb snooze fest shows signs of opening up into a free-for-all in both parties.

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

It was a bad week for Hillary Clinton. So bad, in fact, that *The Washington Post* [declared](#) she had "the worst week in Washington." From *The New York Times*, there were reports of shady [uranium deals](#) with Russian President Vladimir Putin and [Kazakhstan](#). From *The Post*, it was [reporting](#) on how the Clintons' foundation seems more like a personal piggy bank. And from *Politico*, it was [a report](#) that "Clinton struggles to contain media barrage on foreign cash." (If you haven't kept up, here's a [bullet-point summary](#) of the key bits). And [the book](#) that led to all these stories isn't even out yet.

The responses from Clintonworld have been unconvincing — my favorite was when their supporters denied that a meeting between Bill Clinton and shadowy Kazakh nuclear officials had taken place, only to have a *The Times* reporter [produce](#) photo evidence. But, hey, the Clintons have survived even more concrete evidence of scandal — remember Monica Lewinsky's [semen-stained dress](#)? — so why should this time be any different?

Well, one big difference is that three major news organizations — *The Times*, *The Post* and *Fox News* — [are all working](#) on the story. If it were just *Fox*, the Clintons might be able to spin it as a product of, in Hillary's famous phrase, the "[vast right-wing conspiracy](#)." But that's unlikely to fly this time. Even the liberal group Common Cause has [called for](#) an audit of the Clinton Foundation's finances.

Even so, don't count the Clintons out yet. Even if these scandals ultimately kill Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential candidacy, she'll be inclined to keep it staggering along as long as possible. So long as it looks as if she might be president, the money will keep coming in, and many people will be afraid to challenge her. As soon as her candidacy falls off the table, so will the money, and the influence.

But who benefits from Clinton's troubles now, and who suffers? A few thoughts:

First, this is a shot in the arm for her potential Democratic challengers, who have labored in obscurity. Probably the biggest beneficiary is former Virginia senator [James Webb](#), whose military background and [more centrist](#) views could help bring in the white working-class voters that the Democrats are realizing they [have alienated](#) during the Obama era. Also helped is Sen.

[Elizabeth Warren](#) of Massachusetts, though her close resemblance to Clinton (another northeastern Ivy League white woman) and her own strong corporate ties (Warren made money [advising](#) asbestos companies how not to pay claims, and is worth [many millions](#)) might hurt. Former Maryland governor [Martin O'Malley](#) also gets a boost, though he's the probably the [longest shot](#) of the three.

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On the Republican side, Clinton's travails both hurt and help. By making the political establishment look corrupt, they especially help the anti-establishment candidates such as Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Sens. Ted Cruz and Rand Paul. By damaging a Democratic front-runner, they might help Republican establishment favorite Jeb Bush. But given the closeness of the Bush and Clinton families in recent years — you'll see [that video](#) of Jeb Bush [presenting](#) Hillary Clinton with a Liberty Medal, on the eve of the Benghazi anniversary, a lot during the GOP primaries — if the whole Bill-and-Hillary dynasty looks corrupt, the Bush dynasty could be tarnished by association. And, in fact, the corruption associated with the Clintons might make voters more skittish about political dynasties in general.

Among the biggest losers, of course, are the people who donated to candidate Clinton in the hopes of winning favorable treatment from her presidency. Those investments are looking shakier. Even if she does somehow find her way to the White House, her actions will get that much more scrutiny from those who suspect that influence-peddling might have been involved — which, it seems, is now pretty much everybody.

On the other hand, the biggest winners probably include America's political reporters and pundits, as what a few months ago was looking like a Hillary-vs.-Jeb snooze fest shows signs of opening up into a free-for-all in both parties. For that, we owe the Clintons a hearty "thank you." Clintonworld has never lacked for cronyism and shady deals, but it also has always delivered first-class entertainment. This time around, it seems, is no different.

The Federalist

[In 2013, The Clinton Foundation Only Spent 10 Percent Of Its Budget On Charitable Grants](#)

Hillary Clinton's non-profit spent more on office supplies and rent than it did on charitable grants

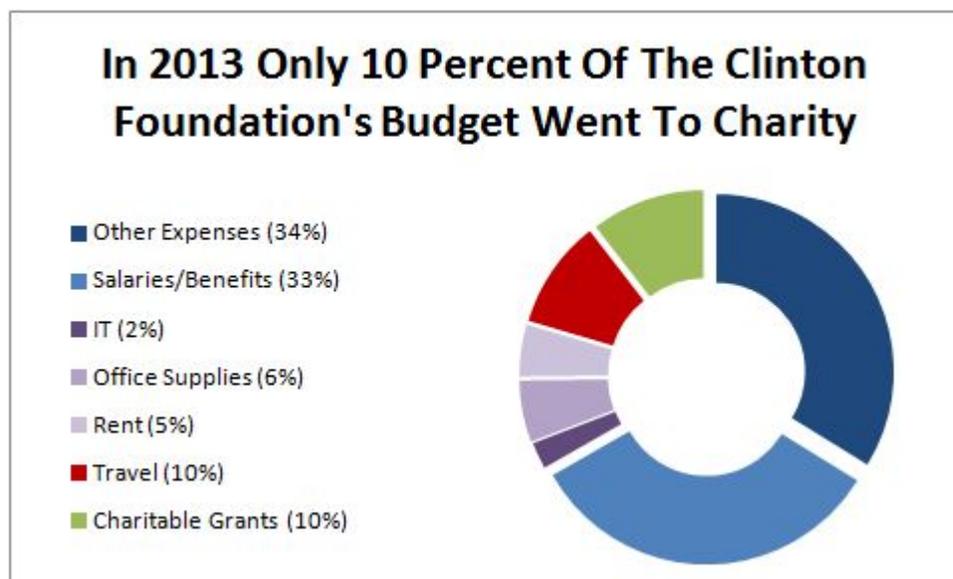
by [Sean Davis](#)

After a week of being attacked for shady bookkeeping and questionable expenditures, the Clinton Foundation is [fighting back](#). In a [tweet](#) posted last week, the Clinton Foundation claimed that 88 percent of its expenditures went “directly to [the foundation's] life-changing work.”

More than 88% of our expenditures go directly to our life-changing work: <http://t.co/5BrnpBtlp6pic.twitter.com/GoKfRE9rKq>

Clinton Foundation (@ClintonFdn) [April 25, 2015](#)

There's only one problem: that claim is [demonstrably false](#). And it is false not according to some partisan spin on the numbers, but because [the organization's own tax filings](#) contradict the claim.



In order for the 88 percent claim to be even remotely close to the truth, the words “directly” and “life-changing” have to mean something other than “directly” and “life-changing.” For example, the Clinton Foundation spent nearly \$8.5 million—10 percent of all 2013 expenditures—on travel. Do plane tickets and hotel accommodations directly change lives? Nearly \$4.8 million—5.6 percent of all expenditures—was spent on office supplies. Are ink cartridges and staplers “life-changing” commodities?

Those two categories alone comprise over 15 percent of all Clinton Foundation expenses in 2013, and we haven't even examined other spending categories like employee fringe benefits (\$3.7 million), IT costs (\$2.1 million), rent (\$4 million) or conferences and conventions (\$9.2 million). Yet, the tax-exempt organization claimed in its tweet that no more than 12 percent of its expenditures went to these overhead expenses.

How can both claims be true? Easy: they're not. The claim from the Clinton Foundation that 88 percent of all expenditures go directly to life-changing work is demonstrably false. Office chairs do not directly save lives. The internet connection for the group's headquarters does not directly change lives.

But what if those employees and those IT costs and those travel expenses indirectly save lives, you might ask. Sure, it's overhead, but what if it's overhead in the service of a larger mission? Fair question. Even using the broadest definition of “program expenses” possible, however, the 88 percent claim is *still* false. How do we know? Because the [IRS 990 forms submitted by the Clinton Foundation](#) include a specific and detailed accounting of these programmatic expenses. And even using extremely broad definitions—definitions that allow office supply, rent, travel, and IT costs to be counted as programmatic costs—the Clinton Foundation fails its own test.

According to [2013 tax forms filed by the Clinton Foundation](#), a mere 80 percent of the organization's expenditures were characterized as functional programmatic expenses. That's a far cry from the 88 percent claimed by the organization just last week.

If you take a narrower, and more realistic, view of the tax-exempt group's expenditures by excluding obvious overhead expenses and focusing on direct grants to charities and governments, the numbers look much worse. In 2013, for example, only 10 percent of the Clinton Foundation's expenditures were for direct charitable grants. The amount it spent on charitable grants—\$8.8 million—was dwarfed by the \$17.2 million it cumulatively spent on travel, rent, and office supplies. Between 2011 and 2013, the organization spent only 9.9 percent of the \$252 million it collected on direct charitable grants.

While some may claim that [the Clinton Foundation does its charity by itself](#), rather than outsourcing to other organizations in the form of grants, there appears to be little evidence of that activity in 2013. In [2008](#), for example, the Clinton Foundation spent nearly \$100 million purchasing and distributing medicine and working with its care partners. In [2009](#), the organization spent \$126 million on pharmaceutical and care partner expenses. By [2011](#), those activities were virtually non-existent. The group spent nothing on pharmaceutical expenses and only \$1.2 million on care partner expenses. In [2012](#) and [2013](#), the Clinton Foundation spent \$0. In just a few short years, the Clinton's primary philanthropic project transitioned from a massive player in global pharmaceutical distribution to a bloated travel agency and conference organizing business that just happened to be tax-exempt.

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Contentions

[Clinton Cash and Circumstantial Evidence](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

A few days into the *Clinton Cash* scandal and apologists for Hillary and Bill are starting to retreat. After days of focusing on smearing author Peter Schweizer, the investigative reports of [the New York Times](#), [the Wall Street Journal](#), and now [Fox News](#) have made it harder to dismiss the discussion about the connection between the massive donations to the Clintons' foundation and speaking fees for the former president and influence peddling at the State Department. Instead, they are relying on more legalistic defenses and saying that Schweizer and other journalists who have followed up on his reporting can't prove that Hillary Clinton performed favors for donors to her family charity or those who paid her husband half-million-dollar honorariums. So far, that's true as there is no "smoking gun" memo in which the Clintons make clear promises of corrupt action in payment for the largesse that had been bestowed upon them. But what Democrats and all Americans should be asking about this argument is why some people get prosecuted for corruption on such circumstantial evidence while others are considered likely to be elected president. If circumstantial evidence less compelling than that contained in *Clinton Cash* can lead to an indictment of Senator Robert Menendez, why should we dismiss this story as just a political attack?

The Menendez analogy is inexact but nevertheless worth thinking about. The New Jersey senator faces jail for having done favors that benefited the business of his longtime political donor and friend. The donor was a doctor who made a fortune via Medicare and there's little doubt that Menendez helped smooth his path to riches. But what's lacking in the case is any hard evidence that showed that this was a corrupt transaction between the two rather than just

constituent service or a favor to a friend. Unless the doctor informs on the senator (something the federal prosecutors are hoping to achieve by over-indicting the senator's alleged partner in crime with enough charges to keep him in prison for hundreds of years), it's hard to see how they will obtain a conviction. Even if everybody in New Jersey and Washington probably thinks this is a classic example of pay for play, there is a huge gap between what looks fishy and the sort of thing that can put a senator in prison.

The same can be said of all the allegations about the Clintons since it is unlikely either they or their donors will tell on each other absent the possibility of legal coercion.

The latest shoe to drop is the report about the way the Clintons became the "gatekeepers" for any company that wanted to do business in Haiti during the reconstruction effort after a devastating earthquake in 2010. By the same set of curious coincidences that led those who profited from the sale of 20 percent of America's uranium reserves to Russia to become donors to the Clinton Global Initiative and sponsors of highly paid speeches by Bill Clinton, a different set of "philanthropists" wound up getting contracts to aid reconstruction and infrastructure work in Haiti also after donating fortunes to the ubiquitous Clinton Foundation. The former president, who was co-chair of a recovery commission, and the State Department facilitated such access. One of the most egregious and embarrassing examples came when a company with little mining experience was granted a gold mining permit. By another astonishing coincidence, Tony Rodham, the secretary of state's brother, was soon named to its board.

In reply to this and the shocking revelations about a Russian state agency acquiring an American uranium mine from Clinton donors, friends of the putative 2016 Democratic presidential candidate can only shrug their shoulders and demand that critics "prove" to a legal certainty that the favors done their benefactors was part of corrupt deal. They're right. There probably isn't a piece of paper lying around in which Bill or Hillary say what it will cost in terms of charitable gifts or honorariums to help potential donors. And if it was ever written in an email, we know that email and the server on which it was recorded have since been erased.

All we have left is the circumstantial evidence that shows that some of the nice people who gave to the Clintons' charity the cash needed to do some good, but also make the former first couple immensely wealthy, wound up having some of their business affairs advanced by government action. Others clearly hoped that this would be so. After all, the Clinton Global Initiative is just one of many worthy causes and others have longer pedigrees and more impressive records of achievement. People gave to the Clintons because of the good they could have done for themselves rather than to merely do good.

But just because a prosecutor isn't likely to haul the Clintons into court over all these astonishing coincidences (or at least not so long as the Democrats control the Department of Justice), that doesn't mean their behavior doesn't smell to high heaven. Nor should it allow their court of apologists to obscure the real issues here with personal attacks and diversionary tactics. The court in which the Clintons deserve to be condemned is that of public opinion. It is there that Hillary's friends must be, like Bob Menendez will soon be doing in a federal courtroom, reduced to saying that the journalists who have dug up their secrets can't prove they're guilty of corruption even if the circumstantial evidence points in that direction. That may be enough to avoid jail, but what we'll find out in the coming year is whether it is enough to get elected president.

Contentions

Clinton Cash Nation

by Abe Greenwald

The *Clinton Cash* scandal has spurred much discussion of the serial misconduct of Bill and Hillary Clinton. But the affair speaks to realities larger and more destructive than the political pathologies of one family. The Clinton Foundation saga marries liberalism's core grandiosity to the impunity of the new high-flying elite and lays bare a class of global VIP forever celebrating its progressive good works while holding the common citizen in contempt.

Progressive grandiosity was born long ago with the socialist impulse to remake the world. It lives on in the liberal expectation of a savior who will set things right. Such political messianism makes it hard for many liberals to find fault with liberal leaders. While conservatives reject perfection and take human defects as given, many liberals see the shortcomings of a Barack Obama or a Hillary Clinton as a threat to their faith.

It's easier, then, for liberals to downplay a progressive politician's record and focus instead on their "meaning." This goes a long way in explaining both the reelection of Obama and the continued support for Hillary, two liberal politicians stuffed to the gills with meaning and shot through with teleological purpose. They're not admired for what they've done but for simply being objects of admiration—and inevitability.

It follows that liberal and conservative candidates respond to very different incentive structures. Jeb Bush must declare, "I don't see any coronation coming my way," lest he seem entitled. Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, asks, "Don't you someday want to see a woman president?" lest we forget her date with destiny. Not only is she already among the elect; it's her selling point.

Today we recognize the elect by a particular set of associations. The Davostocracy that's come to include rock stars, politicians, athletes, tech gurus, and CEOs puts out glossy books about charity, inclusiveness, and cooperation. On panels and talk shows they serve up their lives as inspirational tales in which outsize success is always tempered by gratitude and generosity. They build foundations to anchor their personal brands in popular concepts such as globalization and sustainability. The hope—and it seems usually to be fulfilled—is that ordinary folks outsource some degree of their own good sense and moral inclination to these pervasive media superstars. To be a fan of one of the elect is to indicate one's own probity and sound judgment. Buy into a feel-good brand and you don't have to worry about all the sticky details.

While pundits fret over the Bush or Clinton Dynasty, the more insidious threat to democracy is a beatified jet-set nobility to whom the rest of us hand over our stake in the culture and the country.

Among this nobility, the Clintons are the perpetual first family. In 1996 Hillary Clinton wrote a book titled *It Takes a Village*. Disguised as a how-to guide for helping the children of the future, the bestseller was a book-length advertisement for the Clinton brand. In 2007, during Hillary Clinton's first presidential campaign, Bill Clinton put out a bestseller titled, hysterically, *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*. Disguised as an account of selflessness, it was an advertisement for the now infamous Clinton Foundation.

Even before the Clinton Foundation appeared to be an international clearinghouse for high-stakes influence peddling, it was an opaque and self-serving project of the Davostocracy.

According to some accounts, the foundation spent as little as 10 percent of its budget on charity in 2013. The opacity explains how the Clintons could go a decade and a half pulling money from scoundrels, not claiming donations, and misfiling taxes while earning only praise for their efforts.

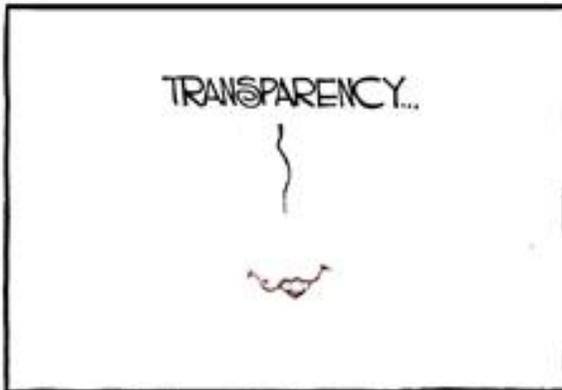
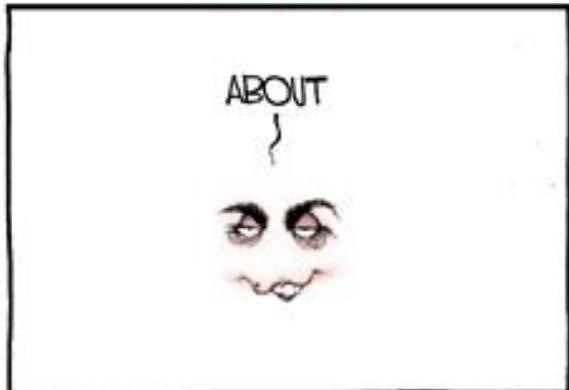
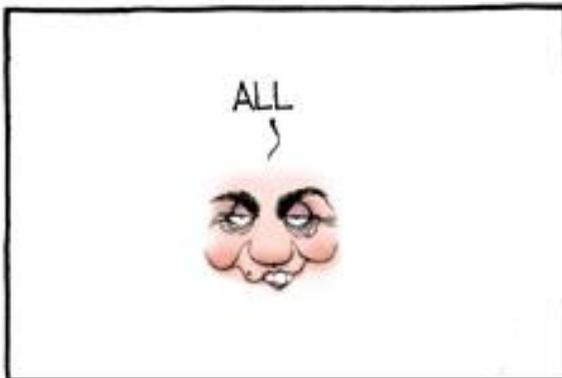
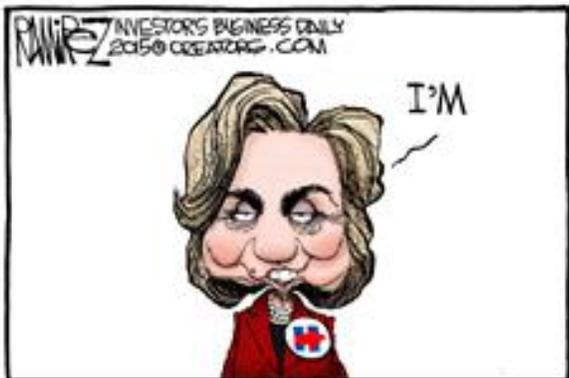
Liberal messianism and elite-worship enjoy a wholly complementary relationship. Progressives expect to cede large realms of their lives to capable leaders who will deliver a fairer world. The Clintons have traded on both their meaning and their unquestioned elite status to earn pardons for a multitude of sins. While the world looked the other way *Clinton Cash* happened. Both ideas are there in Hillary's campaign message: "Everyday Americans need a champion. I want to be that champion." The Clintons have long thrived in the convergence of these trends. It remains to be seen if they will also be undone by them.



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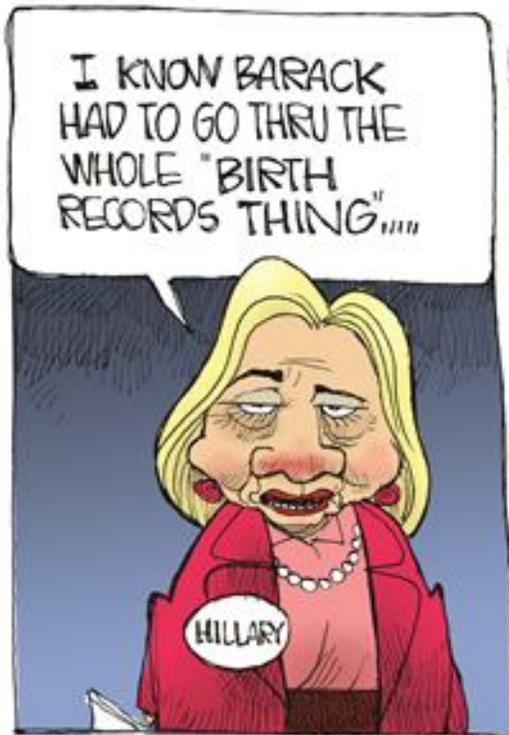
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JOE BIDEN with his WING MAN