



# Brewed By Caribou

## *Emails Reveal Obama Officials Hold Meetings Outside The White House To Avoid Their Own Transparency Rules*

**NEED A MEETING WITH A WHITE HOUSE OFFICIAL BUT DON'T WANT TO PUT IT ON THE BOOKS? HEAD TO CARIBOU COFFEE**

**CLAIM:** President Obama: “But I Can Tell You We Have Put In Place The Toughest Ethics Laws And Toughest Transparency Rules Of Any Administration In History. In History.” (President Barack Obama, [Remarks At A Town Hall Meeting](#), Elyria, OH, 1/22/10)

**REALITY:** Jeff Smith, White House Senior Adviser To The Director Of The Office Of Science And Technology Policy, Offered To Meet With Jim Kirkland Of GPS Industry Outside Of The White House To Avoid Appearing In Visitor Logs. “Other emails released on Tuesday show Jeff Smith, a senior adviser to the director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, offering to meet with Jim Kirkland, an executive from the GPS industry, off the White House grounds. LightSquared clashed with the GPS industry for years as it tried to get approval to use frequencies near those used by GPS. Republicans have alleged that contracts for LightSquared, which was backed by several major Democratic donors, had received preferential treatment from the White House.” (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)

- **Smith:** “You’d Appear On An Official WH Visitor List Which Is Maybe Not Want [Sic] You Want At This Stage...” “‘Jim – coffee at Caribou Coffee – across the corner from the WH – would work at 11:30 a.m. on Friday...plus getting you through the new WH security rules these days almost takes an act of Congress almost (and you know how well that’s going these days),’ Smith wrote. ‘[P]lus you’d appear on an official WH Visitor List which is maybe not want [sic] you want at this stage ...’” (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)

**As Obama’s Deputy Chief Of Staff, Jim Messina Used His Personal Email Address Instead Of His White House Address To Conduct Government Business.** “The interactions between the Finance Committee and PhRMA were detailed in an earlier report from the Energy and Commerce Committee, but Messina’s use of his private email address — at issue because he was conducting government business on a non-government, undisclosed account — is a new revelation.” (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)

- **Messina To PhRMA, From His Personal Account Days Before ObamaCare Passed: “I Will Roll**

**[P]elosi To Get The 4 Billion.** “‘I will roll [P]elosi to get the 4 billion,’ Messina wrote Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) lobbyist Jeffrey Forbes from his personal account just days before the Affordable Care Act cleared Congress in March 2010. ‘As you may have heard I am literally rolling over the house. But there just isn’t 8-10 billion.’” (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)

- **“All Official Communication Must Be Preserved Under The Presidential Records Act.”** (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)
- **“The Committee Report Says The White House ‘Has Refused To Verify’ Whether Emails From White House Staffers’ Personal Accounts Were Preserved.”** (Jennifer Epstein, “GOP: W.H., Messina ‘Failed’ On Transparency,” [Politico](#), 7/31/12)

## **HOLDING MEETINGS OUTSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE TO AVOID TRANSPARENCY IS COMMONPLACE FOR OBAMA’S TEAM**

**Obama Officials Have Met “Hundreds Of Times” With Lobbyists At A Coffee Shop Across The Street From The White House.** “Here at the Caribou on Pennsylvania Avenue, and a few other nearby coffee shops, White House officials have met hundreds of times over the last 18 months with prominent K Street lobbyists -- members of the same industry that President Obama has derided for what he calls its ‘outsized influence’ in the capital.” (Eric Lichtblau, “Across From White House, Coffee With Lobbyists,” [The New York Times](#), 6/24/10)

- **White House Officials And Lobbyists Discussed Issues Ranging From Wall Street Regulation To Health Care.** “On the agenda over espressos and lattes, according to more than a dozen lobbyists and political operatives who have taken part in the sessions, have been front-burner issues like Wall Street regulation, health care rules, federal stimulus money, energy policy and climate control -- and their impact on the lobbyists’ corporate clients.” (Eric Lichtblau, “Across From White House, Coffee With Lobbyists,” [The New York Times](#), 6/24/10)

**The White House Also Met With Lobbyists In A Complex Just Off The White House Grounds.** “Caught between their boss’s anti-lobbyist rhetoric and the reality of governing, President Barack Obama’s aides often steer meetings with lobbyists to a complex just off the White House grounds – and several of the lobbyists involved say they believe the choice of venue is no accident.” (Chris Frates, “Lobbyists: W.H. Hides Meetings Off-Site,” [Politico](#), 2/24/11)

- **By Holding The Meetings With Lobbyists At Jackson Place, The Obama Administration Is Able To Evade Their Own Transparency Rules And The Secret Service Background Checks.** “The Jackson Place townhouses are a different story. There are no records of meetings at the row houses just off Lafayette Square that house the White House Conference Center and the Council on Environmental Quality, home to two of the busiest meeting spaces. The White House can’t say who attended meetings there, or how often. The Secret Service doesn’t log in visitors or require a background check the way it does at the main gates of the White House.” (Chris Frates, “Lobbyists: W.H. Hides Meetings Off-Site,” [Politico](#), 2/24/11)
- **Meetings Are Pushed Out Of The White House So That They Are Kept “Off The Books” And Hidden From The Public.** “The White House scoffs at the notion of an ulterior motive for scheduling meetings in what are, after all, meeting rooms. But at least four lobbyists who’ve been to the conference rooms just off Lafayette Square tell POLITICO they had the distinct impression they were being shunted off to Jackson Place – and off the books – so their visits wouldn’t later be made public.” (Chris Frates, “Lobbyists: W.H. Hides Meetings Off-Site,” [Politico](#), 2/24/11)

- **White House Press Secretary Jay Carney: “The Suggestion That We’re Not Being Transparent Is Laughable.”** CARNEY: “It is routine for the White House officials to meet with all types of people, including lobbyists, and frequently here. The suggestion that we’re not being transparent is laughable given the unbelievable precedent this administration has set in its -- closing the door, the revolving door, and releasing these records.” (Jay Carney, [White House Press Briefing](#), Washington, D.C., 2/24/11)
- **Carney: “The Guiding Principle Here Is Transparency, And We Believe That -- Nobody Is, That I’m Aware Of, Is Hiding Where They’re Meeting.”** (Jay Carney, [White House Press Briefing](#), Washington, D.C., 2/24/11)

**The Meetings "Reveal A Disconnect Between The Obama Administration's Public Rhetoric ... And The Administration's Continuing, Private Dealings With Them."** "But because the discussions are not taking place at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, they are not subject to disclosure on the visitors' log that the White House releases as part of its pledge to be the 'most transparent presidential administration in history.' The off-site meetings, lobbyists say, reveal a disconnect between the Obama administration's public rhetoric -- with Mr. Obama himself frequently thrashing big industries' 'battalions' of lobbyists as enemies of reform -- and the administration's continuing, private dealings with them." (Eric Lichtblau, "Across From White House, Coffee With Lobbyists," [The New York Times](#), 6/24/10)