



Irrelevant

Obama Starts Another Week On Defense, Confronting Questions About His Relevancy And Ability To Govern

QUESTIONS ABOUT OBAMA'S COMPETENCY AND AUTHORITY ARE PILING UP

Obama's Ignorance Of The Scandals Enveloping His Administration Makes Him Seem

"Unacquainted With The Work Of His Own Administration." "President Obama's professed ignorance of the targeting of conservatives by one government agency and his support of tracking journalists' sources by another highlight one of the great paradoxes of his presidency: Sometimes he uses his office as aggressively as anyone who's held it; other times he seems unacquainted with the work of his own administration." (Philip Rucker and Peter Wallsten, "President Obama Exercises A Fluid Grip On The Levers Of Power," [The Washington Post](#), 5/18/13)

NBC News: "The Competency Questions For This Administration Are Piling Up..." "But the competency questions for this administration are piling up: The Veteran's Administration is a mess; their explanation on Benghazi is about the lack of communication and security procedures; and the IRS explanation is overworked and mistake-prone bureaucrats in Cincinnati." (Chuck Todd, et al, "First Thoughts: Scandal Or Bureaucratic Incompetency?," [NBC News](#), 5/20/13)

The Washington Post's Dan Balz: "There Are Questions About His Authority At This Point." DAN BALZ: "Well, it's obviously very serious. I mean, Lois is right. The president, in his second term, is on a clock. And I think that one of the ways to measure this is to go back to Inauguration Day and think of what the president looked like on that day. He had an expansive agenda. He was assertive. He was taking the fight to the Republicans. He was on the offensive. Today he's clearly on the defensive. His agenda is very much constrained. There are questions about his authority at this point." (CBS's "Face The Nation," 5/19/13)

The Washington Post's Bob Woodward: "You Can't Purchase Immunity From Governing." BOB WOODWARD: "Well, I think you have to step back and say what's the theory of governing here? And the theory is, it seems, oh, there are investigations of the IRS so we can't interfere. There is this leak investigation of the AP, so we can't get involved. Oh, there is an investigation of Benghazi so we're not responsible. The president and the executive branch need to govern on a daily basis and you can't purchase immunity from governing." (NBC's "Meet The Press," 5/19/13)

CBS's Bob Schieffer: "Maybe He Should Look Now For People Of Substance Who Know About Other Things Who Could Help Him Govern." CBS's BOB SCHIEFFER: "At this point, just spare me the talking

points and the excuses. No matter whether Republicans or Democrats are doing this kind of thing, this stuff is not just wrong, it's really stupid. And it will take more than firing a few temps and low-level bureaucrats to fix it. The president won reelection with a smart political team, but the election is over. Maybe he should look now for people of substance who know about other things who could help him govern." (CBS's "Face The Nation," 5/19/13)

- **Schieffer, On Obama's Reaction To The Scandals: "Qualified Him For Washington's Fastest Growing Club: The Longer And Longer List Of Officials Who Suddenly Don't Know Much About A Lot Of Unpleasant Things..."** SCHIEFFER: "It did take a while for the news to get to some quarters. We heard that the president said he didn't find out about it until last week, last week, which qualified him for Washington's fastest growing club: the longer and longer list of officials who suddenly don't know much about a lot of unpleasant things from Benghazi to the Associated Press investigation." (CBS's "Face The Nation," 5/19/13)

THIS WEEK BRINGS NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S ONGOING SCANDALS

Why Did It Take Obama Until May 10 To Find Out About The IRS Scandal?

White House Counsel Kathryn Ruemmler Learned About The Substance Of The I.G. Report During The Week Of April 22 – Including The Fact That The IRS Targeted Conservatives. "The White House's chief lawyer learned weeks ago that an audit of the Internal Revenue Service likely would show that agency employees inappropriately targeted conservative groups, a senior White House official said Sunday. That disclosure has prompted a debate over whether the president should have been notified at that time. In the week of April 22, the Office of the White House Counsel and its head, Kathryn Ruemmler, were told by Treasury Department attorneys that an inspector general's report was nearing completion, the White House official said." (Peter Nicholas, "Obama's Counsel Was Told Of IRS Audit Findings Weeks Ago," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 5/19/13)

- **Ruemmler Learned That IRS Employees Scrutinized Groups By Using Words Like "Tea Party" And "Patriot."** "In that conversation, Ms. Ruemmler learned that 'a small number of line IRS employees had improperly scrutinized certain...organizations by using words like 'tea party' and 'patriot,' the official said." (Peter Nicholas, "Obama's Counsel Was Told Of IRS Audit Findings Weeks Ago," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 5/19/13)
- **FLASHBACK: White House Spokesman Jay Carney Claimed The Counsel's Office Only Was Alerted To "The Fact That The IG Was Finishing A Review."** QUESTION: "Jay, the President said that he himself was unaware of the IRS targeting. But was anyone else at the White House aware as early as 2011, when this first came out, or of the testimony in March when an IRS official talked about it?" CARNEY: "No. My understanding is that the White House Counsel's Office was alerted in the week of April 22nd of this year, only about the fact that the IG was finishing a review about matters involving the office in Cincinnati. But that's all they were informed as a normal sort of heads up." (Jay Carney, [White House Press Gaggle](#), 5/13/13)

On Friday, The Inspector General Revealed He Told Obama's Deputy Treasury Secretary Neal Wolin About The Investigation Of The IRS's Targeting Of Conservative Groups In June 2012. "The inspector general gave Republicans some fodder Friday when he divulged that he informed the Treasury's general counsel he was auditing the I.R.S.'s screening of politically active groups seeking tax exemptions on June 4, 2012. He told Deputy Treasury Secretary Neal Wolin 'shortly after,' he said. That

meant Obama administration officials were aware of the matter during the presidential campaign year.” (Jonathan Weisman, “Republicans Expand I.R.S. Inquiry, With Eye On White House,” [The New York Times](#), 5/17/13)

On Friday, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew Revealed He First Learned Of The IRS's I.G. Report In March. TREASURY SECRETARY JACK LEW: “I learned the substance of this report last Friday when it became a matter of public knowledge. Before that, in mid-March, I had had a conversation, just a getting-to-know-you conversation with the Inspector General right after I started, and he went through a number of items that were matters they were working on. And the topic of the project on the 501(c)3 issue was one of the things he briefed me was ongoing. I didn’t know any of the details of it until last Friday.” (Bloomberg TV’s [“Street Smart,”](#) 5/17/13)

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Did Secretary Sebelius Cross “Serious Ethical Lines” In Soliciting Donations To Enroll America For ObamaCare?

The Washington Post Editorial: HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius Is “Dancing Around Serious Ethical Lines” By Asking Insurance Companies For Private Funds For Enroll America. “One of the biggest questions hanging over the health-care system is how many young Americans will sign up for coverage once the Affordable Care Act begins to phase in this October. If too few buy insurance on the markets that the government is creating, insurance companies would be stuck covering primarily the old and the sick. They would have to pay out more per customer. Their customers, in turn, would have to pay more to those companies for coverage. The stakes for the Health and Human Services Department, which is overseeing the transition, are tremendous. But they are not high enough to justify HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius dancing around serious ethical lines. The department admitted recently that Ms. Sebelius has solicited private support — including from insurance companies — for Enroll America, a nonprofit group devoted to expanding access that a former Obama administration staffer runs.” (Editorial, “Kathleen Sebelius Dances On An Ethical Line,” [The Washington Post](#), 5/18/13)

- **“Given That HHS Directly Controls The Markets In Which The Insurers Operate, We Would Hardly Blame Them For Reading A Lot, Even Too Much, Into The Secretary’s Requests And Feeling Nervous About Them.”** “The legal question is still murky. The ethical one is less so. The Post’s Sarah Kliff, who broke the story, reports that at least one official in the health-care industry felt pressure to give money and other forms of support to Enroll America. Given that HHS directly controls the markets in which the insurers operate, we would hardly blame them for reading a lot, even too much, into the secretary’s requests and feeling nervous about them. But even if they didn’t, it would have been easy to expect donations to curry favor with Ms. Sebelius.” (Editorial, “Kathleen Sebelius Dances On An Ethical Line,” [The Washington Post](#), 5/18/13)

“White House Officials Said They Did Not Sign Off On The Fund-Raising Calls Made By Kathleen Sebelius...” “The Obama administration’s efforts to raise private money to carry out the president’s health care law have provoked such a strong partisan uproar that potential donors have become skittish about contributing, according to several people involved in the fund-raising program. White House officials said they did not sign off on the fund-raising calls made by Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, but were generally aware that she would be seeking support from outside groups.” (Robert Pear, “Potential Donors To Enroll America Grow Skittish,” [The New York Times](#), 5/19/13)

BUT DON’T ASK THE OBAMA WHITE HOUSE – THEY THINK THE FACTS OF THE SCANDALS ARE “IRRELEVANT”

Obama Senior Advisor Dan Pfeiffer Refused To Say Where Obama Was Throughout The Night Of The Benghazi Attacks, Calling It “A Largely Irrelevant Fact.” FOX NEWS’ CHRIS WALLACE: “With due respect, you didn’t answer my question. What did the president do that night?” OBAMA SENIOR ADVISOR DAN PFEIFFER: “He was kept, he was in constant touch that night with his national security team, and kept up to date with the events as they were happening.” WALLACE: “When you say his national security team, he didn’t talk to the Secretary of State except for the one time when the first attack was over. He didn’t talk to the Secretary of Defense, he didn’t talk to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Who was he talking to?” PFEIFFER: “He was talking to his national security staff, his national security council, are the people who keep him up to date about these things as they happen.” WALLACE: “Was he in the Situation Room?” PFEIFFER: “He was kept up to date throughout the day.” WALLACE: “Do you not know whether he was in the Situation Room?” PFEIFFER: “I don’t know what room the president was in that night. That’s a largely irrelevant fact.” (Fox News’ [“Fox News Sunday,”](#) 5/19/13)

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Pfeiffer Called Questions Over Who Edited The Benghazi Talking Points, “Largely Irrelevant.” CBS’s BOB SCHIEFFER: “What I’m saying to you, is that was just PR, that was just a PR plan to send out somebody who didn’t know anything about what happened. Why did you do that? Why didn’t the Secretary of State come and tell us what they knew and if you knew nothing, say we don’t know yet? Why didn’t the White House Chief of Staff come out, and I mean this as no disrespect to you, why are you here today? Why isn’t the White House Chief of Staff here to tell us what happened?” OBAMA SENIOR ADVISOR DAN PFEIFFER: “Well, let’s start with Susan Rice. Ambassador Rice went out that day, and represented the administration, and spoke to what happened with the best information we had, that everyone in the administration had, is what she looked at. And that was the consensus of the intelligence community. What we do, is we want to go out and speak to the problems as they happened. What’s important here is when problems happen, is that the president takes responsibility for them and tries to fix them. That’s what we’re talking about in Benghazi. You’re right, that is an absolute tragedy, what happened. The question isn’t who edited what talking points. That’s largely irrelevant. What is relevant is, what are going to do to make sure that never happens again which is why the president called on Congress to pass legislation to beef up embassy security around the world and protect our diplomats.” (CBS’s [“Face The Nation,”](#) 5/19/13)

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Pfeiffer: “Law Is Irrelevant” On IRS Scandal. ABC’s GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: “What does the President believe? Does the President believe that would be illegal?” OBAMA SENIOR ADVISOR DAN PFEIFFER: “I can’t speak to the law here. The law is irrelevant. The activity was outrageous and inexcusable and it was stopped.” (ABC’s [“This Week,”](#) 5/19/13)

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