

Secrecy Wins Again

Citizens deprived of relevant information cannot participate in their government's decisions or hold their leaders accountable. Without this check, government officials are more likely to make decisions contrary to the public interest, abuse their authority, and engage in corrupt activities. In words that ring prophetic today, James Madison warned in 1822, "A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both." **Former Chief of Staff to President Clinton - John Podesta in a forward to David Banisar's paper** [Government Secrecy: Decisions Without Democracy](#)

On November 2, 2007 the Clinton Library released about a dozen [Freedom of Information Act Requests related to UFOs](#). The story caused a great stir in the press that was anxiously awaiting files related to presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

Of the less than 100 pages of UFO documents and pictures released (almost 30,000 pages under review), certain portions were withheld under various restrictions detailed in the FOIA regulations. The withheld material was mostly restricted to three requests.

- FOIA # 2006-0481- Records of correspondence, meetings, or phone calls between Hillary Clinton and Laurance Rockefeller
- FOIA # 2006-0492 All files on UFOs, Roswell New Mexico, flying saucers, Area 51 or the TV show X-Files in the files of John Podesta
- FOIA# 2006-545 Photographs between President Clinton and Laurance Rockefeller

At the opening of the Library in 2004, [Hillary Clinton told TV Host Larry King](#) that openness would be the motto of the Library. "That's one of the things the library really stands for," Hillary stated. "It physically stands for openness with all the glass and the light. But he (Bill) wants it to be a place where people come and really study. And everything's going to be available."

[\[1\]](#)

In addition to the statement by Hillary there were indications during the Clinton administration

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that openness in government was to be the idealized goal. Often the administration, through its openness point man John Podesta, made moves by to bring a proper balance of "openness in government" vs. what was called "unthinking secrecy." This attitude was symbolized the declassification of over one billion pages of documents [2] by President Clinton's [Executive Order 12958](#) in 1995 which set up a policy that all government documents would be declassified after 25 years except in exception circumstances.

Based on these declarations of openness by Hillary and actions by the Clinton administration, on December 6, 2007 I appealed the withheld material from the three key FOIA requests. Unlike the long lines that haunt the release process at the library, the final ruling on the appeal was swift and to the point. Emily Robison, the Deputy Director of the Library wrote,

"Of the 10 pages (full or partial) and five photographs which you appealed from FOIA cases 2006-0545-F, 2006-0492-F, 2006-481-F, all pages and photographs remain restricted in compliance with the restrictions of FOIA or PRA that specific what material can be released to the public. [3]"

The withheld material was quite a disappointment.

It was hoped the request for pictures between President Clinton and Laurance Rockefeller would confirm the rumored story that the two had sat down in August 1995 so that Laurance Rockefeller could make his pitch to the President for UFO disclosure. The withheld material which asked for records of meetings and correspondence between Hillary and Laurance Rockefeller was very more upsetting because Hillary was actually [a point person in the Clinton administration](#) for the efforts by Laurance Rockefeller to get disclosure related to UFOs.

The most bizarre denial of information related to the FOIA asking for " all files on UFOs, Roswell, New Mexico, flying saucers, Area 51 or the TV show X-Files in the files of John Podesta."

Some of the withheld pages related to material in Podesta's files on the Top Secret base in Nevada called Area 51. In the past Podesta had openly stated that openness on Area 51 would

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be a good idea.

"My tendency is to try and err on the side of openness rather than on the side of secrecy, and I think a thorough review about whether more information could be brought to light (about Area 51) would be a worthwhile enterprise." [4]

The fact that John's own files were withheld is therefore illogical. The move to block Podesta's UFO related files was even more puzzling in light of [John Podesta strong statement for UFO Disclosure](#) made at a Sci-Fi news conference in October 2002.

"I think it's time to open the books on questions that have remained in the dark; on the question of government investigations of UFOs. It's time to find out what the truth really is that's out there. We ought to do it because it's right; we ought to do it because the American people quite frankly can handle the truth; and we ought to do it because it's the law."

The Clinton Library, however, chose to keep the Podesta Area 51 and Clinton - Rockefeller material secret. It has been decided to keep researchers in the dark. Alas, if there is one thing we have learned from the lessons of history - it is that we have learned nothing from history.

[1] Larry King Live, CNN, November 17, 2004

[2] Shachtman, Noah, Secrecy Suddenly a Campaign Issue, Wired News, January 17, 2004

[3] Emily Robison to Grant Cameron Letter, December 19, 2007

[4] Stephens, Tony Batt, Podesta Urges Airing of Area 51 – Former White House Chief of Staff Supports Openness, Las Vegas Review Journal, October 23, 2002