



New measures of information from White House

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This week, the White House cut the flow of information that once opened its Office of Administration to the “Freedom of Information Act”. That office took care of among other things, the handling of e-mails.

This is happening on “Sunshine Week”; a time to observe issues of government transparency.

Former Secretary of State and First Lady Hillary Clinton came from a high powered law firm in Arkansas in her younger days. She also cut her legal teeth by laying the groundwork to impeach President Nixon, while working as a staff lawyer on the House Judiciary Committee.

Nixon tried stopping the public from gaining information that he considered private regarding his Administration.

It’s ironic how history repeats itself.

In our democracy, the freedom of information act or “FOIA” gives the press the right to file for information from the federal government when it needs information.

The uncanny way in which Hillary Clinton handled her emails as President Barack Obama’s former Secretary of State, underscores just how hard it is to obtain government information under FOIA in what was supposed to be the age of transparency.

Mrs. Clinton did all her government work from her private server out of her New York home. She turned over 55,000 pages of her emails to the State Department. But, she admitted to deleting 30,000.

Unfortunately for the press and the public, Mrs. Clinton’s case seems to serve as a template for the rest of the government departments funded by U.S. taxpayers; and a stone-wall for the press (even if the press is armed with a FOIA request).

The Founder of the FOIA Resource and Congressional Lawyer Lisette Garcia doesn’t buy Hillary Clinton’s excuse in the least. “This is the least transparent administration in American history,” Garcia said. “There’s a strong duty to preserve. So, the idea that she would willy-nilly delete I think is reckless.”

Three government departments in particular reveal information is next to impossible to obtain:

According to the Center for Effective Government, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense move at a snail's pace when responding to FOIA requests. But coming in dead last is the State Department.

Sometimes getting the most basic information from Hillary Clinton's old employer can take up to 2-years.

Patrick Eddington is a FOIA Analyst from the Cato Institute. "I think there's also at times the tendency to try to find reasons, excuses etcetera; to not respond to requests. Particularly if they happen to be extremely embarrassing and wind up calling into question existing policy."

That's exactly what Mr. Nixon tried doing in Washington DC more than 40-years ago when a young lawyer tried expediting his impeachment.

Now, that lawyer who admittedly side-stepped the free flow of information that may have been worthy of FOIA requests, isn't helping her case, as she possibly wants to sit in the seat once occupied by Richard Nixon.