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- Home
- Advertise
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- Publications
- Speaking Info
- Multimedia
- Resume
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- Traffic Stats
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White House Website Stylish, Lacks Substance

Sunday, June 28th, 2009

Sort of appropriate, I think:

...while the five-month old Obama White House Web site has drawn rave reviews for its fresh design and innovation, several experts say it has not moved the White House toward being “the most open and transparent [administration] in history,” as new media director Macon Phillips promised on day one.

Information is harder to find on the Obama Web site than it was on the site created and run by the Bush administration, according to Web site experts.

“It doesn’t seem to be quite in line with the notion of the pillars of government 2.0 being openness and transparency. It seems just the opposite,” said Mark Drapeau, a columnist for Federal Computer Week who writes frequently on the ways that new technologies can be used by the government...

“It’s lots of PR and not a lot of data,” said Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at the Cato Institute, who called the site “brochureware.”

My favorite part:

One of the most noteworthy marks of the site has been its use as a distribution point, and showcase, for the thousands of exclusive photos taken by Mr. Obama’s personal photographers. The main page of Mr. Obama’s Web site revolves around a large window that rotates between four photos, which are often flattering portraits of the president.

The White House has also created a Flickr.com account on the privately run, commercial Web site, and has posted hundreds of photos of the president, often showing him behind the scenes of his official events or during his private moments.

“Once we got here and saw ... what [chief White House photographer] Pete Souza and his team were producing it was a no-brainer to see how we could make that more accessible,” Mr. Phillips said.

Good to know they’re at least working hard to make flattering photographs of the president “more accessible” to the public. Who says Obama has dropped the ball on transparency?

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This entry was posted on Sunday, June 28th, 2009 at 11:22 am by Radley Balko and



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16 Responses to “White House Website Stylish, Lacks Substance”

#1 | **Dave Krueger** | June 28th, 2009 at 11:45 am

Just what an incumbent needs: yet another taxpayer-funded way to unfairly compete against challengers.

+17

#2 | **MacGregory** | June 28th, 2009 at 12:21 pm

Dave is right. Obama is already campaigning for 2012. I suppose it's necessary though. The MSM is so lacking of Obama coverage.

+10

#3 | **Brandon Bowers** | June 28th, 2009 at 12:55 pm

Why shouldn't Obama's website mirror his career?

+5

#4 | **Dave Krueger** | June 28th, 2009 at 1:33 pm

#3 Brandon Bowers

Why shouldn't Obama's website mirror his career?

Because it's not "Obama's website". It's the White House's website. It should dispense information not promote the holder of the office.

+3

#5 | **Billy** | June 28th, 2009 at 1:46 pm

Who says Obama has dropped the ball on transparency?

Certainly not me -

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/kj5ron>

But, has he dropped the ball on "Change" anyone might believe in? Yes, definitely. Any president who doesn't have the balls to veto a bill he doesn't like is nothing more than a weasel, period.

+0

#6 | **john** | June 28th, 2009 at 1:47 pm

Thats Obama. Its all about him. Does anyone else find it more than a bit disturbing that, upon the arrest of a leftist Honduras President who defied his Congress and Supreme Court, Obama is sympathetic to the President, not the will of the Honduran people??

+0

#7 | **Chuchundra** | June 28th, 2009 at 1:51 pm

The Moonie Times and Cato slam Obama's Whitehouse website. Color me shocked.

-19

#8 | **JS** | June 28th, 2009 at 1:57 pm

"Good to know they're at least working hard to make flattering



photographs of the president "more accessible" to the public. Who says Obama has dropped the ball on transparency?"

lol brilliant line Radley!



#9 | **IrishMike** | June 28th, 2009 at 3:28 pm

Any of those "private moment" photos show Obama suckin' on a cig? Perhaps while reading the Philip Morris Monopoly Act" he just signed?



#10 | **omar** | June 28th, 2009 at 3:40 pm

The White House Press Secretary for the 21st century. Pretty soon, they'll be spinning reporter questions using twitter.



#11 | **Andrew Williams** | June 28th, 2009 at 4:44 pm

I'd love to see someone replace the White House webpage with that fake Obama Facebook page.



#12 | **MacGregory** | June 28th, 2009 at 5:21 pm

The whitehouse web page? Thats just bush league. Peanuts for a guy of his magnitude. A star on Hollywood Blvd-much more like it.



#13 | **Les** | June 28th, 2009 at 9:34 pm

Does anyone else find it more than a bit disturbing that, upon the arrest of a leftist Honduras President who defied his Congress and Supreme Court, Obama is sympathetic to the President, not the will of the Honduran people??

Well, even if forcing the President of Honduras (his being a leftist seems to be a moot point) to leave the country is in line with their Constitution (and is it, really?), since when have U.S. Presidents (or U.S. citizens, for that matter) cared about the will of the people of a foreign country?



#14 | **Rick** | June 29th, 2009 at 1:50 am

Hugo Chavez is on TV almost all the time with his multi hour speeches. I'm sure we could soon have ABC the All Barrack Channel up and running.



#15 | **Jim Collins** | June 29th, 2009 at 9:06 am

Come on, I love that website. It is a great source of Obama pictures.....for my dartboard.



#16 | **Mojotron** | June 29th, 2009 at 11:11 am

OK, I'll bite- what was the information available before that is not available now? The only thing I ever went to the whitehouse.gov site for was speeches (and transcripts), and it only takes a sec to figure out why

there are fewer of those available 6 months in to a new president's term- but they're all there. The only legitimate beef from that article is that it's harder to find out everything that occurred on a single date, but even they note that the search function is "vastly better" than the Bush site. Pretty much all the comments state what an improvement the new site is, where's the "substance"?

Cato guy- do you not know about data.gov?



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