

Republican Perspective
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by Ed Manning

THE ART OF DECEPTION

Openness, transparency - these are among the few weapons the citizenry has to protect itself from the powerful and the corrupt - Michael Moore

Regardless of one's political views, most (not all) Americans want our government to be open and transparent. So, it comes with a good dose of irony that on the 10th anniversary of Sunshine Week (March 15-21), the Obama Administration removed a federal regulation that subjects the White House Office of Administration to the Freedom of Information Act. Sunshine Week is a national initiative to promote a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include the news media, civic groups, libraries, non-profits, schools and other interested in the public's right to know.

Americans were told on Inauguration Day, 2009 that the Obama Administration would become "the most open and transparent in history." Important legislation would be placed on the internet for the public to review and comment. Then came Obamacare where House Speaker Pelosi said "But we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it – away from the fog of the controversy."

This White House and many of our federal agencies are the least transparent in recent memory. Parsing of the truth and obfuscation is normal operating procedure. Ignoring or stonewalling requests under the Freedom of Information Act is routine.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) pushed propaganda to keep out an important story of public interest that became known as "Fast and Furious". The ATF secretly enlisted licensed gun dealers in Arizona to sell AK-47 type semi-automatic rifles and .50 caliber guns, capable of taking down an elephant, to Mexico's killer drug cartels. A US Border Patrol Agent is murdered by one of these guns and the Justice Department refused to release documents to the House investigation. This leads to Attorney General Holder being held in contempt.

The American embassy in Benghazi, Libya is attacked by radical Islamist terrorists who murders our Ambassador and three other Americans. The President and then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton publicly declare that the attack was instigated by an internet video casting dispersions on Islam. The public is kept in the dark about the whereabouts and actions taken by the President during the attack. Requests by the Ambassador for increased security before the attack were ignored by the State Department.

Lack of openness continues when the IRS targets conservative groups before the 2012 election. The President says he “learned about it from the same news reports that I think most people learned about this.” The President tells Fox’s Bill O’Reilly that there is “not even a smidgen of corruption.” The Treasury Department’s Inspector General for Tax Administration revealed that there is “potential criminal activity” involved in the disappearance and hiding of emails by IRS officials.

More openness and transparency issues arise when 47 out of the government’s 73 inspectors general send a warning letter to Congress identifying instances where the Obama Administration was stonewalling them. They accused several major agencies of imposing “serious limitations on access to records.” Substitution Game: what if this occurred under George Bush?

Even the compliant media weighs in against the Administration. The Investigative Reporters & Editors gives its 2013 “Golden Padlock” award to the US Border Patrol for its secrecy of illegal immigrants. The Department of Justice gets special recognition for its improper monitoring of journalists and received a place in the group’s “Hall of Shame.”

David Sanger, chief Washington correspondent of the New York Times: “This is the most closed, control freak administration I’ve ever covered.”

Len Downie, former executive editor of the Washington Post: “The Obama Administration War on Leaks is by far the most aggressive that I’ve seen since the Nixon Administration, and I go back that far.”

Ann Compton, ABC News White House correspondent: “He’s the least transparent of the seven presidents I’ve covered in terms of how he does his daily business.”

Josh Gerstein, Politico: “If the story is basically one that they don’t want come out, they won’t even give you the basic facts.”

Jill Abramson, New York Times: “the Obama years are a benchmark for a new level of secrecy and control.”

The Society of Professional Journalism wrote Obama raising its objections to “politically driven suppressing of the news and information about federal agencies.” “We consider these restrictions a form of censorship; “ it has not always been this way.”

Obama’s promised fundamental transformation of the country continues with its regression from a constitutional republic to a monarchy.