

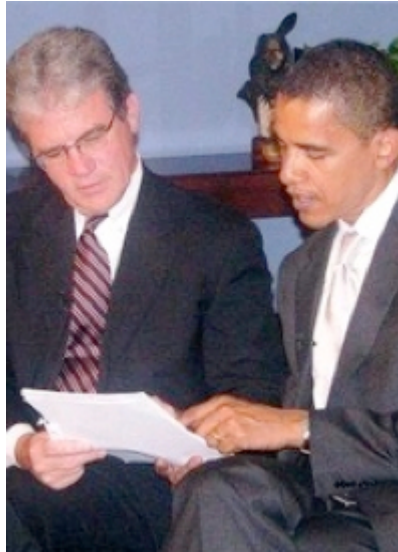


Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 31, 2011

Obama Receives Transparency Award at Secret Meeting

On Monday President Obama received an award for transparency, which ironically was given to him during a closed, unannounced meeting. Bestowed upon the President from a group of transparency advocates, the ceremony took place in secret, even though ? as of two weeks ago ? it was supposed to be open to the press.

According to [Politico](#), the meeting was inexplicably postponed and rescheduled without notice for Monday without disclosing the meeting on [the President's] public schedule or letting photographers or print reporters into the room.



Those present at the ceremony, which took place in the Oval Office, included Gary Bass of OMB Watch, Tom Blanton of the National Security Archive, Danielle Brian of the Project on Government Oversight, Lucy Dalgish of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Patrice McDermott of [OpenTheGovernment.org](#).

Gary Bass commented:

Our understanding going into the meeting was that it would have a pool photographer and a print reporter, and it turned out to be a private meeting. He adds, He was so on point, so on target in the conversation with us, it is baffling why he would not want that message to be more broadly heard by reporters and the public interest community and the public generally.

The Blaze observes:

But yet no member of the press was allowed in. And despite Press Secretary Jay Carneys assertions earlier this month that the president "has demonstrated a commitment to transparency and openness," some aren't buying it.

Carney declared just hours before the White House postponed the meeting:

This President has demonstrated a commitment to transparency and openness that is greater than any administration has shown in the past, and he's been committed to that since he ran for President and he's taken a significant number of measures to demonstrate that.

While it may be true that Obama has made transparency a talking point both during his campaign and throughout his administration, assertions that he has made good on his word are misguided. In fact, a federal court actually [fined](#) the Obama administration for *lack* of transparency back in January 2010, when the Justice Department failed to provide information in the case of *U.S. v. Sturdevant*. The fine came as no surprise, as the Justice Department had already acquired a reputation for dodging requests for information related to its dismissal of the voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther Party.

One government transparency watchdog, the Sunlight Foundation, [noted](#) the lack of transparency in the



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Obama administration just days ago. The groups director, Ellen Miller, called 2010 tremendously disappointing and remarked that little has happened in 2011 to change her view.

The Hill reported:

Miller said the presidents open government directive had made the open government community hopeful after years of secrecy from the Bush administration, particularly because the government promised things like data audits of federal agencies and the publishing of high-value government data sets for public use that have yet to come to fruition.

Just two days ago, FavStocks.com [reported](#) that the Obama administration has employed political operatives to screen Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests:

[U]ncensored emails newly obtained by the AP show that employees within the Homeland Security Department were warning that senior Obama administration appointees were delaying the release of government files. Department employees emails described the appointees behavior as “meddling” and even “crazy.” One email from the deputy to the departments chief privacy officer said of the political appointees, “They dont like to abide by the law or be reminded that they are breaking it.” That employee has since been replaced, a move that has raised questions of “retaliation.”

In September 2009, three human rights groups [targeted](#) the Obama administration for its refusal to confirm or deny the existence of documents regarding the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, asserting that the Obama administrations persistent secrecy becomes more inexcusable by the day.

The administration also provoked complaints of secrecy during the infamous [backroom deals](#) that led to the passage of ObamaCare. In March 2010, Centrist Net reported, President Obama had flip flopped today, embracing the kind of backroom deals he campaigned against in 2008.

An award touting this administration as transparent does nothing more than underscore its total lack of transparency.

And even if the Obama administration were to have stayed true to its promises of openness, many question whether that calls for an award. Steve Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, does not seem to think so. He remarked on the lack of necessity for the award, “I dont feel moved today to say ‘thank you, Mr. President.’”

Calling the award aspirational, he added:

And in that sense, one could say it resembles the award [of] the Nobel Peace Prize. Its not because Obama brought peace to anyone but because people hoped he would be a force for good in the world, and maybe thats the way to understand this award.

Photo: Senate bill sponsors Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Barack Obama (D-Ill discussing the CoburnObama Transparency Act, 2006



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