



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 16, 2015

Stephanopoulos Apologizes for Silence on His \$75G to Clinton Foundation

George Stephanopoulos, chief political correspondent for *ABC News*, gave an on-air apology Friday morning for his silence concerning the \$75,000 he has donated over the past three years to the Clinton Foundation.



He made his apology on the weekday show *Good Morning America*, which he hosts. He is also the regular host the ABC Sunday morning program *This Week*. He acknowledged the contributions Thursday in a statement to Politico ["On Media" blogger](#) Dylan Bryers.

Stephanopoulos, a communications director for Bill Clinton during the 1992 presidential campaign and senior political adviser in the Clinton White House, had previously made no public mention of the contributions and remained silent when vigorously challenging *Clinton Cash* author Peter Schweizer's allegations that foreign contributions to the foundation, a 501 non-profit founded by former President Clinton, may have influenced decisions Hillary Clinton made as secretary of state during Barack Obama's first term.

"I made charitable donations to the Foundation in support of the work they're doing on global AIDS prevention and deforestation, causes I care about deeply," Stephanopoulos said in a statement to the On Media blog. "I thought that my contributions were a matter of public record. However, in hindsight, I should have taken the extra step of personally disclosing my donations to my employer and to the viewers on air during the recent news stories about the Foundation. I apologize."

The contributions of \$25,000 in each of the years 2012-2014 were, in fact, a matter of the Foundation's public record, "just sitting there buried on a website for anyone to stumble upon," as Politico's [senior media writer](#), Jack Shafer, put it. But the viewing public, and apparently the nation's news media, were unaware of it when Stephanopoulos was seen grilling Schweizer about the allegations in his book in a *This Week* interview aired April 26.

"We've done investigative work here at *ABC News*, found no proof of any kind of direct action," Stephanopoulos told Schweizer during the interview. "An independent government ethics expert, Bill Allison, of the Sunlight Foundation, wrote this: He said, 'There's no smoking gun, no evidence that she changed the policy based on donations to the foundation.' No smoking gun."

Later in the interview, Stephanopoulos said, "I still haven't heard any direct evidence, and you just said you had no evidence that she intervened here." Other news organizations that used Schweizer's research "haven't confirmed any evidence of any crime," the *This Week* host said.

"Really quite stunned by this," Schweizer wrote in an e-mail to Bloomberg Politics, calling the host's silence on the subject "a massive breach of ethical standards. He fairly noted my four months working as a speech writer for George W. Bush. But he didn't disclose this?"

"Going into that interview, I kind of assumed that the relationship with the Clintons was in the past, that he had made this transition into the media, and it was a different chapter in his life," Schweizer said on *Fox News*. "Well, what I think ABC could do is: Let's do another interview on the Sunday



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morning show to talk about the contents of the book,” the author told host Sean Hannity.

Stephanopoulos, who has been with *ABC News* since 1996, is hardly the only former political operative to become a TV journalist. Others, from Al Sharpton to Karl Rove, have become fixtures on cable news channels. But, as Shafer points out, most of the others come on as partisan commentators, while the status of Stephanopolos as anchor of news programs and special reports on one of the “Big Three” networks carries with it an expectation that he is an impartial reporter and news analyst, covering the news without “covering for” anyone.

ABC News told the On Media blog there would be no punitive action against Stephanopoulos: “We accept his apology,” a spokesperson said. “It was an honest mistake.” A statement issued by the network news department downplayed that “mistake”:

“As George has said, he made charitable donations to the Foundation to support a cause he cares about deeply and believed his contributions were a matter of public record,” the statement read. “He should have taken the extra step to notify us and our viewers during the recent news reports about the Foundation. He’s admitted to an honest mistake and apologized for that omission. We stand behind him.”

For how long, the network didn’t say. As issues and controversies surrounding Hillary Clinton — from donations to the foundation, to her vanished e-mails, to her response to the Benghazi attack and her role in events leading up to it — play out over the next year or more, the presumed persona of Stephanopoulos as a disinterested presenter and analyst of the news may suffer further erosion.

His past ties to the Clintons and to the Clinton Foundation may render his role as host, anchor, and chief political correspondent no longer credible.



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