



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 8, 2013

Why Are Key Obama Policies Shrouded in Secrecy?

“Everything secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity.” — Lord Acton

Barack Obama campaigned for president promising to usher in an era of transparency in government. That promise stands next to you [“if you like your doctor you can keep your doctor”](#) in the Barack Obama Presidential Hall of Shame.



One of the most egregious examples of President Obama’s duplicity is the way he and his administration have responded to the roster of revelations that have come from the leaks of documents defining the surveillance activities of the National Security Agency (NSA).

Not only has the president been called out on his support of secrecy at home, but leaders around the globe have turned on him, as well, after learning that American snoops have been monitoring their phone calls for years.

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Then there is the [bugging of the United Nations](#), the [World Bank](#), the [International Monetary Fund](#), and other organizations by none other than the NSA. This is germane to the secrecy analysis because the NSA is part of the Executive Branch and the head of that branch is Barack Obama.

Anita Kumar, writing for McClatchy Newspapers, [points out the criticism](#) the president has faced after his 180 on openness.

As criticism swelled at home and abroad, Obama said the nation should examine how the government can strike a balance between national security and privacy concerns. He said at an August news conference that Americans will resolve any disagreements about the NSA programs through “vigorous public debate.”

But what started out as a national examination largely turned into a private review with few public meetings, little document disclosure and next to no public debate, say some lawmakers, technology organizations and civil liberties groups. And now, as those behind-the-scenes reviews begin to wind down, Obama is not providing details of the results.

“As part of the overall review of our intelligence-gathering practices, decisions are being made by the president and implemented by the president, but beyond that, I have to ask you to wait until the reviews, the various reviews have been completed and we have more to say,” White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

A key tenet of the Obama administration’s code of silence seems to require the thickest walls be built around the sectors of government that can take advantage of the cover to do the most damage to liberty. [As reported by Tech Dirt:](#)

The administration, which likes to pretend it’s the most transparent in history, is actually one of the most secretive. Its attempts at transparency have almost exclusively been focused on where it can



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get the most political bang, not for what areas people expect the government to be transparent about — such as how it interprets the laws that allow the government to spy on everyone....

What's incredible is that it appears that no one high up in the administration seems to recognize how this is a strategy that will almost certainly make things worse, not better. It may be how the administration is used to functioning, but it makes it much more difficult to believe anything that is said about a supposed "vigorous public debate" being held on the surveillance activities. It also means that as more leaks come out revealing more questionable practices, the constant backtracking and excuses will just destroy whatever credibility the administration has left on this issue. If, instead, it were to actually be transparent and simply reveal things like how it interprets the law, and allows for a real public discussion on these matters, that would actually result in some frank discussions that the administration seems terrified of actually having.

Beyond the [violations of the Fourth Amendment evident in the NSA's dragnet surveillance](#) turning citizens into suspects, there are several other significant examples of President Obama's fierce determination to keep Americans in the dark when it comes to policies and programs that pose the most potent threats to their freedom.

One of the most egregious examples is the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Every round of negotiations are conducted in secret and even the content of the draft agreement itself would be completely unknown were it not for a WikiLeaks project that resulted in the publication of a chapter on intellectual property.

William F. Jasper, writing for *The New American*, explains how and why President Obama is [keeping details of the TPP trade pact under wraps](#).

If there is one word that is used more often than "reform" by governments, politicians, and international organizations — and abused even more frequently and egregiously — it is "transparency." As with the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the White House and the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office regularly proclaim their commitment to transparency while doing everything possible to hide their actions from their constituents. The USTR's "Fact Sheet: Transparency and the Trans-Pacific Partnership" is intended to give the impression that the Obama administration is forthrightly providing the American people with all the up-to-date information they need to accurately evaluate the agreements that are being made in their name, and that would, if accepted by Congress, devastatingly impact their lives, their liberty, and their future.

And, perhaps the most deadly deception perpetrated by the secrecy-loving president is the number of innocent civilians who have been killed by missiles fired from U.S. drones. Until recently, in fact, the Obama administration denied the drone war was even being waged. Now, even though he admits to targeting "militants" using the remote control weapons, the president refuses to comment on how many civilians have been blown up in the process.

Then, of course, there is ObamaCare. After the roll-out derailed, press reports revealed that the president likely knew there were problems with his hallmark legislation and also knew that Americans would not be able to keep their doctor. A [CBS News report](#) about the weekly GOP address that Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) gave on November 16 on the president's broken promise noted:

"Millions of Americans are coming to realize that those are your tire tracks on their canceled policies," Johnson said to the president, accusing Mr. Obama and his Democratic allies in Congress



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of perpetrating “political fraud” to aid their political goals.

“Consumer fraud this massive in the private sector could — and should — bear serious legal ramifications,” Johnson said. “For President Obama, however, it helped secure enough votes to pass Obamacare and win re-election.”

As he continues burrowing deeper and deeper into the sands of secrecy, President Obama seems not to realize that that soil shifts and there will always be those committed to digging around until the truth is told.

McClatchy writes:

Mark Jaycox, a policy analyst for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said he doesn’t expect the administration to change much even amid the intense criticism. This administration, he said, has always held fast against similar criticism. For example, it resisted for years bipartisan pressure to release more information about its top-secret targeted killing program.

“It’s a pattern of the Obama administration,” he said.

Tech Dirt recognizes the problem for the president:

Extreme secrecy may seem like the easier short-term strategy, but it’s just digging an ever deeper hole that the administration is going to have to try to climb out of in the long-term. Hiding reality from a public that’s going to find out eventually is just making the problem worse.

Photo of President Obama: AP Images

Joe A. Wolverton, II, J.D. is a correspondent for The New American and travels frequently nationwide speaking on topics of nullification, the NDAA, and the surveillance state. He is the host of The New American Review radio show that is simulcast on YouTube every Monday. Follow him on Twitter @TNAJoeWolverton and he can be reached at jwolverton@thenewamerican.com



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