



## The Real Lesson of the Scandals Surrounding Pruitt's Resignation

Ronald Reagan once quipped that politics is the second-oldest career and bears a striking resemblance to the oldest. In the decades since he made that observation, it has been demonstrated to be more true with each passing year. Case in point: the hypocritical fervor surrounding the resignation of EPA boss Scott Pruitt (shown). Politics — not principles — have guided the entire affair.

If Pruitt is guilty of half of what he has been accused of, he is certainly corrupt. And while the liberal mainstream media busy themselves reporting on the scandals that ultimately led to his resignation, their hypocrisy shows through in almost every paragraph and sound bite. One would almost be forced to think that the liberal media find themselves scandalized by corruption, as if they had never seen it (or defended) it before. Considering the lengths to which many of them went in pretending that Hillary Clinton was free from any stain of corruption — even as the known facts demanded the opposite view — their feigned shock is simply too much to buy into.

So, while the evidence certainly seems to be against Pruitt, the question remains — what exactly is he accused of that led him to resign?

As the *New York Post* reported, “Pruitt was facing 13 congressional ethics investigations over his lavish spending of taxpayer money on security and first-class flights, as well as a sweetheart deal he cut on a DC condo owned by a lobbyist whose husband had business with the EPA.”

And from CNN: “An ethics cloud hung over Pruitt for months, as lawmakers from both parties, environmental groups and government watchdogs raised questions about his spending, housing arrangements, security team and raises for political appointees.”

*The Guardian* reported that Pruitt “had come under increasing pressure over issues including the use of public funds for travel and office improvements; for using an obscure provision of the Safe Drinking Water Act to give pay raises to two aides; and for having paid \$50 a night to rent a room in a Capitol Hill townhouse from the wife of an energy industry lobbyist” and that a “whistleblower revealed earlier this week that Pruitt kept a secret calendar to hide meetings with industry representatives.” That report





Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on July 8, 2018

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went on to say, “Staffers reportedly met in Pruitt’s office to alter or remove records of the meetings. It also emerged that Pruitt asked staffers to use their personal credit cards for his hotel bookings.”

A couple of things are worth mentioning here. First, as *Slate* reported, it was largely due to the courage of whistleblowers and the tenacity of watchdog groups that Pruitt’s misdeeds ever came to the attention of the public:

While some of Pruitt’s foibles were made public by government entities, like the Government Accountability Office and the EPA’s inspector general, much of the inappropriate behavior was exposed by current and former employees of the Environmental Protection Agency, many of them career staffers who had stayed on despite the deregulatory, pro-industry zealotry of the Trump administration and then bravely risked their careers to ensure the public knew how a government official was wasting tax money on personal extravagances. Other stories of corruption came from records obtained by open-records requests, which, were it not for watchdog groups who demanded sunshine in places the EPA would rather have kept in the shadows, would never have made it to the public’s eye.

Second, if one of the points conservatives used as the basis for their claims that Hillary was corrupt was the fact that she attempted to hide the evidence of her corruption, that same principle applies here. Truth cuts both ways.

Again, if Pruitt is guilty of what he is accused of (and it looks increasingly so), he is a scoundrel and should have resigned. In fact, he should never have occupied public office in the first place. But while the liberal mainstream media and their office-holding comrades in the DNC froth at the mouth over this as if they had never seen the likes of it before, one need only remind them of the litany of scandals (too long to list in this limited space) filed away under “C” for “Clinton, Bill and Hillary.” Why, the financial scandals alone (Whitewater to Uranium One) are enough to make Pruitt look almost honest by comparison. Almost. Because that — after all — is the point. Traits such as honesty, honor, integrity, and trustworthiness are not measured by contrast.

And while liberals are ready to roast Pruitt on a spit (provided it is not coal-fueled), many conservatives are steering for the ditch on the other side of the road by touting him — as President Trump did in his farewell tweet to the outgoing EPA boss — as a “terrific guy.” Here is a clue: A “terrific guy” would not spend other people’s money like a petulant teenager with dad’s credit card.

The reality is that liberals attack Pruitt for the same reason conservatives defend him. And that reason has nothing to do with principles and everything to do with politics. Pruitt — as an EPA boss who was working to dial back the anti-industry regulations of his predecessors — found himself on the wrong side of the Left and the right side of the Right. But there was a time when the very word “conservative” would have excluded the type of spend-it-like-it’s-going-out-of-style recklessness to which Pruitt seems to be addicted. Pruitt’s appointment by Trump would likely have been enough to earn him the hatred of the Left all by itself. Whatever was lacking there was more than provided for by his practice of rolling back policies that stood in the way of progress.

That Pruitt landed on the right side of the global-warming issue or the coal issue or the oil issue (or any other issue, for that matter) is entirely beside the point if the apparent reason he wound up there was because it was in his best financial interests to keep the lobbyists for those industries happy.

The real lesson from Pruitt’s myriad scandals and overdue resignation is this: My enemy’s enemy is not necessarily my friend, and my friend’s friend may well be my enemy. Just because Pruitt is not *one of*



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*them* is no reason to make the mistake of thinking he must be *one of us*.

Until principle becomes again more important than partisan politics, the Left will continue to tar and feather anyone the Right would laud — and vice-versa. The actual character and behavior of those people will seldom even enter the picture.

*Photo of Scott Pruitt: AP Images*



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