



TPP and the New Clinton E-mail Scandal

Hillary Clinton is embroiled in yet another scandal involving e-mails during her tenure as secretary of state. This one deals with e-mails that would show her involvement in — and advocacy for — the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). While Clinton has campaigned on claims that she was never in favor of the multi-nation trade deal, the available evidence shows that she was for it before she was against it. Now the State Department is blocking a trove of e-mails which would likely show to what extent Secretary Clinton pushed the deal she claims to have never liked.



International Business Times (IBT) [reported](#) Monday that an “open records [request](#) for correspondence between Clinton’s State Department office and the United States Trade Representative” made by *IBT* in July 2015 has been blocked until after the election in November:

The State Department originally [said](#) it estimated the request would be completed by April 2016. Last week the agency [said](#) it had completed the search process for the correspondence but also said it was delaying the completion of the request until late November 2016 — weeks after the presidential election. The delay was issued in the same week the Obama administration filed a [court motion](#) to try to kill a lawsuit aimed at forcing the federal government to more quickly comply with open records requests for Clinton-era State Department documents.

The impetus for *IBT*’s open records request was a trove of State Department cables leaked by WikiLeaks in July 2015. Those cables were from 2009 and 2010 and show that Clinton’s “agency — including her top aides — were deeply involved in the diplomatic deliberations over the trade deal,” according to *IBT*.

IBT, which filed the request right after those cables were made public, points out that “If *IBT*’s open records request is fulfilled on the last day of November, as the State Department now estimates, it will have taken 489 days for the request to be fulfilled.”

Clinton, who had heavily promoted TPP even as labor, environmental, consumer advocacy and public health groups opposed it, found herself campaigning in a political environment which was not friendly to TPP. Her rivals — both Democratic and Republican — have campaigned against the TPP and she responded in the most Clintonian way possible: She switched positions and denied that she had ever been in favor of TPP.

Even left-leaning CNN took notice and [published an article](#) in June 2015 titled *45 times Secretary*



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on June 10, 2016

Clinton pushed the trade bill she now opposes which said:

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, seems reluctant to take a firm position on an issue dividing her party: whether President Obama should have fast-track trading authority for the immense trade deal he has been negotiating, the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#). With some progressive voters eyeing her with some skepticism, and facing a challenge (such as it is) from candidates on her left, she is being advised to tack in that direction.

President Obama has been pushing hard for the deal, while Democrats in the House of Representatives on Friday revolted and voted against a key part of the legislation. One told me, “there was a very strong concern about the lost jobs and growing income inequality,” adding, pointedly: “Ms. Clinton should take notice.”

Considering the fact that Obama and Clinton are longtime [frenemies](#) — not to mention her campaigning *against* his pet project — it may seem odd that he is going out of his way to protect her from the fallout of her major flip-flopping on this issue by blocking the e-mails until after the election. But it is likely that he is protecting the TPP and not Clinton by his actions. By assuring that those e-mails will not see the light of day before the elections, Obama seems to be attempting to also ensure that there will be no real exposure of the ways in which TPP has been negotiated right from the beginning.

As for Clinton, there is no doubt she pushed for the deal she now sharply opposes. [Testifying before Congress in 2011](#), she said “although the State Department does not have the lead on [TPP] — it is the United States Trade Representative — we work closely with the USTR [United States Trade Representative].” And then there are those cables. [IBT reported](#) on four separate cables in which the State Department — under Clinton’s direction — made a full court press for TPP.

Her public statements are — thanks to the Internet — also immune from the memory hole. Some of those statements have been less explicit and others more so. Perhaps the most damning of them, though, was from a 2012 speech in Singapore when Clinton promised that TPP “will lower barriers, raise standards, and drive long-term growth across the region.” A shining endorsement, indeed.

So, when Clinton says, “[I did not work on TPP](#),” she should be given about the same benefit of the doubt she deserves when she says, “[I never sent or received any e-mail that was deemed classified, that was marked classified](#).” Her actions — and the facts surrounding them — are so loud, one has to strain to hear her words.

It appears that Hillary Clinton may have had some very strong reasons for trying to keep her e-mails off the books. This new e-mail scandal, which adds to the scandal that has dogged her since the beginning of her campaign, should certainly give voters pause. As to which side of the TPP debate she is on: that depends entirely on which direction the political winds are blowing.



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