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Judge Kavanaugh And Other Former White House Staff Secretaries To Presidents Of Both Parties Agree On The Importance Of High-Ranking Position As “Key Nerve Center” “Integrally Involved In The Decision-Making Process.” What Are Republicans Trying To Hide From Judge Kavanaugh’s Time In The Bush White House?

Judge Kavanaugh Called His Time As Staff Secretary “Formative,” “Most Instructive” To Who He Is As A Judge

Other White House Staff Secretaries Agree – Position Is “Key Nerve Center,” “Functionally Another Deputy Chief of Staff”

Despite Kavanaugh’s Own Words, Top Republicans Are Trying To Withhold Critical Staff Secretary Documents. What Are They Trying To Hide?



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JUDGE KAVANAUGH DESCRIBED HIS YEARS AS WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY AS “FORMATIVE” AND “MOST INSTRUCTIVE” FOR WHO HE IS AS A JUDGE, MADE HIM “A BETTER INTERPRETER OF STATUTES”

Judge Brett Kavanaugh: “I’ve been a judge on the D.C. Circuit for more than eight years. And as Dean Joseph Kearney pointed out in introducing me, I did not arrive to the D.C. Circuit as a blank slate. People sometimes ask what prior legal experience has been most useful for me as a judge. And I say, ‘I certainly draw on all of them,’ but I also say that my five-and-a-half years at the White House and **especially my three years as staff secretary for President George W. Bush were the most interesting and formative for me.** My job in the White House counsel’s office and as staff secretary gave me, I think, a keen perspective on our system of separated powers. And that’s what I’m going to talk about today. I participated in the process of putting together legislation.” [Remarks at Marquette, [3/3/15](#)]

Judge Brett Kavanaugh: “When people ask me which prior legal experience has been most useful for me as a judge, I tell them I certainly draw on all of them, the clerkships, private practice at Kirkland, Independent Counsel’s office, even college jobs on the Hill at Ways and Means, but the five-and-a-half years in the White House, **especially the three years as Staff Secretary for President Bush, are among the most interesting and most instructive,** and so many memories come to mind and I think about so often.” ... “I talked to

the President and was able to participate in how should he pick someone for the Supreme Court.” ... “It was not apparent to me at the time, and I am certainly not disinterested, but it seems to me **those experiences helped make me a better student of the administrative process, a better interpreter of statutes.**” [Remarks at Opening Session of the ninetieth Annual Meeting of the American Law Institute, [5/20/13](#); 121-135; [VIDEO](#)]

Judge Brett Kavanaugh: “When people ask me which of my prior experiences has been most useful to me as a judge, I tell them that all of them have been useful, and I certainly draw on all of them. But I also do not hesitate to say that **my five and a half years in the White House – and especially my three years as Staff Secretary for President Bush – were the most interesting and in many ways among the most instructive.**” [Remarks to Inn of Court, [5/17/10](#); p. 639-644]

Judge Brett Kavanaugh: “As staff secretary, I was responsible for hustling into the White House right away, contacting the president, immediately getting out a presidential written statement, and working with the speech-writers to help prepare the president's remarks for the following morning, which he delivered from the White House at 10:00 a.m. that Sunday morning.” [From the Bench: The Constitutional Statesmanship of Chief Justice William Rehnquist, [12/1/17](#)]

Brett Kavanaugh: “And your question really goes to how do you assess someone's record? And I think that's done through an assessment of going back, in my case, 16 years of my career and **looking at the kinds of things I've done in the staff secretary's office**, now where I'm an honest broker, where I have to be fair and even-handed in the kind of role I perform for the president -- some of the work I've done in the counsel's office on judges. [Judiciary Committee Hearing, [5/9/06](#)]

FORMER WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARIES DESCRIBE THE JOB AS “A KEY NERVE CENTER” AND “INTEGRALLY INVOLVED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS”

Jon Huntsman Sr., Staff Secretary to President Nixon: “The job of staff secretary, the principal task is to make sure the president is well prepared and his office is in order, to ensure that he is aware of all the correspondence and communications information and **it really is a key nerve center of the White House.**” [Salt Lake Tribune, [3/27/17](#)]

John Podesta and Todd Stern, Staff Secretaries to President Clinton: “First, staff secretaries are not traffic cops. They don't just wave memos or speeches through to the president or hold them in the queue until the next day. **They are integrally involved in the decision-making process for an extraordinarily wide range of policy issues**, since virtually everything comes to them before it goes to the president.” [Washington Post Op-ed, [7/30/18](#)]

Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY), Staff Secretary to President Clinton: “That happens from time to time as staff secretary. **Functionally you become another deputy chief of staff**’ Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-N.Y.), who also served as Clinton's staff secretary a few years later, said in an interview on Monday. The New York congressman,

who once worked in the same law firm as Kavanaugh, called the judge a ‘very intellectually talented person’ and surmised that it would not have been unusual ‘to include him in a substantive role’ in various decisions made at the White House.” [Huffington Post, [7/30/18](#)]

Harriet Miers, Staff Secretary to President George W. Bush: “Harriet Miers, who was staff secretary under President George W. Bush and later went on to serve as his general counsel and was a nominee for the Supreme Court, said the time commitment required for the job is ‘very challenging’ and ‘very taxing.’ “There is an aspect of the job where **the staff secretary is really between advisers and the president**, and that is beneficial to the president because there’s someone assuring his advisers are being able to review materials before it comes to him,’ Miers said in an interview. ‘For example, you wouldn’t want a president who gets something that sets out a policy position and then a day later have another adviser come in and say, ‘I wouldn’t do that.’ You’re really preserving the president’s time.” [Salt Lake Tribune, [3/27/17](#)]

Lisa Brown, Staff Secretary to President Obama: “‘There’s no question their role is to be an honest broker, but you are also driving this process,’ Lisa Brown, who previously served as White House staff secretary for President Barack Obama, told HuffPost in an interview on Monday. **‘So you’re not just a paper pusher ... you’re playing a much more overt role.’** [...] ‘At a minimum, something that he authored, commented on or edited could be relevant to understanding his views,’ added Brown, who is now vice president and general counsel at Georgetown University. ‘And if the question is what he knew about a specific topic, then any materials on that subject that he received would also be relevant.’” [Huffington Post, [7/30/18](#)]

BUT SENATE REPUBLICANS ARE WITHHOLDING DOCUMENTS FROM JUDGE KAVANAUGH’S TIME AS WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY AND DOWNPLAYING HIS WORK THERE, SAYING HE WAS “MORE OR LESS A TRAFFIC COP”

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA): “I have heard that some of my Democratic colleagues would like to request all of Judge Kavanaugh’s records from his time as White House Staff Secretary, but these documents are both the least relevant to Judge Kavanaugh’s legal thinking and the most sensitive to the executive branch.” ... **“Not only would a broad review of Staff Secretary documents be a waste of time, but it would also be a waste of taxpayers’ money.”** [Floor Remarks, [7/24/18](#)]

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA): “Democratic leaders want gratuitous and unnecessary paper from Judge Kavanaugh’s time as White House Staff Secretary. This is an unreasonable request, and I think they know it.” [Floor Remarks, [7/25/18](#)]

Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA): “Indeed, the White House Staff Secretary is **essentially the inbox and outbox** for the President of the United States.” [Floor Remarks, [7/31/18](#)]

Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX): “The one that just seems to be a bridge too far that the Democrats never requested before his 2006 confirmation to the D.C. circuit are the staff secretary documents, which aren’t really his documents,’ Cornyn said. **‘He was more or less a traffic cop.’** [Washington Post, [7/24/18](#)]

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