

Politics

House Democrats mistakenly release transcript confirming big payout to Clinton friend Sidney Blumenthal



Sidney Blumenthal, a longtime confidant of Hillary Clinton's, told congressional investigators he earned "about \$200,000 a year" from a pro-Clinton nonprofit. (Susan Walsh / Associated Press)

By **Evan Halper**

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The **Democrats** on the House Benghazi committee released their final **conclusions** from the inquiry into attacks on Americans in that Libyan city in 2012, and in the report they say, once again, that the investigation is a politically motivated sham aimed at damaging the reputation of **Hillary Clinton**.

But the report, which the Democrats published as a preemptive strike before the Republican majority releases findings likely to charge ineptitude and deception by the former secretary of State, also revealed, apparently unintentionally, details about the eye-popping amount of money a close **Clinton** friend and advisor made in a contract with a pro-Clinton nonprofit.

Democrats released but redacted a transcript of Clinton confidant Sidney Blumenthal answering the committee's questions to make the point that [Republicans](#) do not want the public to know what went on during the his interrogation, during which GOP members arguably used their subpoena power to conduct political opposition research unrelated to Benghazi.

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But the redaction marks are easily erased by anyone able to use a computer's cut-and-paste function. Once the marks are lifted, the transcript portion reveals some unflattering things for any partisans on the committee, Republican or Democrat. It shows that Republicans did, indeed, leverage their subpoena of Blumenthal for political gain, digging into his financial contracts with David Brock and forcing him to reveal the details of a lucrative financial arrangement that congressional sources would [ultimately leak to Fox News](#).

And for Democrats, the exchange exposes once again the absurd amounts of money people in the orbit of the Clintons sometimes seem to rake in just for, well, being in the orbit of the Clintons. "I'd say it's about \$200,000 a year," Blumenthal said when asked by a committee member how much the part-time work offering up advice and ideas was worth.

"Redacted due to Chairman Gowdy's refusal to allow release of transcript," says a footnote to the pages of thick black redaction marks. "If released, the transcript would show that Republicans asked Mr. Blumenthal questions about his relationship with Media Matters, David Brock and Correct the Record." Brock is a longtime Clinton loyalist, and Correct the Record and Media Matters are among the nonprofits he uses to attack Clinton opponents.

And how did Blumenthal get such a contract? "I have had a very long friendship with the chairman of Media Matters, whose name is David Brock, from before he founded this organization, and I have sustained that friendship. And he asked me to help provide ideas and advice to him and his organizations," Blumenthal said.

Actually, the two got to know each other during the impeachment of Bill Clinton, during Brock's former incarnation as a right-wing "hit man" journalist. He was starting to undergo his political conversion and in the process was feeding then-White House aide Blumenthal intelligence about what the right was plotting against Bill Clinton. Both men [wrote](#) about it in their [books](#).

Below is the full transcript excerpt that Democrats intended not to publish. It is unclear who the questioner is in the first section.

Q: Did you ever receive any payment from an organization called Media Matters?

A: Oh, yes. I did — I did receive payment in that period from Media Matters.

Q: Okay. And what was your relationship with Media Matters at that time period?

A: I was a consultant to Media Matters. I'm sorry I—

Q: That's okay.

A: I overlooked that.

Q: When did you become a consultant for Media Matters?

A: I would say the very end of 2012.

Q: Okay. And how did that come about, that you became a consultant for Media Matters?

A: I have had a very long friendship with the chairman of Media Matters, whose name is David Brock, from before he founded this organization, and I have sustained that friendship. And he asked me to help provide ideas and advice to him and his organizations.

Q: So you began your relationship, your paid relationship, with Media Matters at the end of 2012.

A: Right.

Q: Does that continue to this day?

A: It does.

Q: Okay. And what is your salary or your contract with Media Matters? How much money are you earning from them?

A: I'd say it's about \$200,000 a year.

Q: And has that been roughly consistent from when you began receiving payment from Media Matters?

*[redacted due to Chairman Gowdy's refusal to allow release of transcript].

A: I would say it's — I'd have to check. I think it's increased a little bit. It's increased some.

Q: Okay. Are you familiar with the organization American Bridge?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you received any compensation from American Bridge over the last five years?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And how much compensation have you received from American Bridge?

A: Well, when I talk about that amount of money, I mean all of those organizations.

Q: So all of David Brock's entities —

A: Right.

Q: — combined are 200,000?

A: About.

Q: Okay.

A: Something like that.

Q: Okay. So there's American Bridge.

A: Yes.

Q: There's Media Matters.

A: Right.

Q: Are there any other organizations on which you have done work for Mr. Brock?

A: Correct the Record

Q: Okay.

A: — is another organization.

Q: Okay.

A: And then there's the American Independent Institute, which is a journalistic foundation.

Q: So, when you receive your paycheck, who signs the paycheck? Where does that come from?

A: It's deposited directly. I imagine it comes from David Brock.

Q: Okay. Not David Brock personally but one of his —

A: Whoever — whoever is responsible for that payment.

Blumenthal and Republican Select Committee Member Mike Pompeo had the following exchange about Correct the Record:

Q: Fair enough. I'm going to jump around a little bit. You said I think earlier this morning that you still are working for Correct the Record?

A: I am.

Q: And tell me what the mission of Correct the Record is.

A: Correct the Record is pretty much what it says, to correct — it's a nonprofit organization to correct the record about public misstatements about prominent Democrats.

Q: Including this committee. If this committee said something, Correct the Record might comment on things that it said incorrectly and indeed it has?

A: That may well be so.

Q: Have you written any of that?

A: No.

Q: Yeah. So you haven't made any comments as part of your role in Correct the Record related to this committee's work? You haven't written any —

A: I have not written those.

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