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Taxpayer tab for Clinton Inc.: \$16 million

Bill Clinton and his office have received more money through the Former Presidents Act than any other ex-president.

By **KENNETH P. VOGEL** | 3/12/15 5:33 AM EDT | Updated 3/12/15 10:52 AM EDT



Getty

By Election Day 2016, taxpayers will have paid out more than \$16 million to fund Bill Clinton's pension, travel, office expenses and even the salaries and benefits of staff at his family's foundation, federal records show.

Since he left the White House in 2001, Clinton and his office have received more money through the Former Presidents Act than any other ex-president, according to a POLITICO analysis of budget documents.



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Multiple sources familiar with Clinton's funding say the special federal money has supplemented the salaries of some employees of the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation, a global nonprofit that has served as Hillary Clinton's primary platform as she prepares for a presidential campaign expected to launch in coming weeks.

Critics for years have questioned why taxpayers need to support former presidents when they and their families can reap huge paydays, like the then-record \$15 million book advance paid to Clinton for his 2004 memoir. But scrutiny of the act — and of the vast financial empire built by the Clintons — is poised to intensify as questions mount about the family's commingling of personal, political, government and foundation business.

Bill Clinton's payments from the fund, which is administered by the General Services Administration, appear to be compliant with government guidelines.

Clinton foundation officials brushed aside questions about use of public monies to supplement staff salaries there.

Clinton "is allocated funding for an office and for attendant costs (rent, utilities and salaries and benefits for staff)," foundation officials said in an emailed statement. "His office is allocated \$96,000 per year for personnel salaries. GSA does not dictate the number of staff for whom the allocation is used."

A Clinton spokesman also emphasized that no taxpayer money was used to purchase or maintain a private email server operated for the former president's staff starting in 2007, which Hillary Clinton started using in 2009. Her use of the server to send emails as secretary of state has become the center of a swirling controversy about whether she skirted public records laws or State Department rules or compromised the security of top-secret national security information.



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The server was funded entirely out of Bill Clinton's pocket, according to his office.

Of the \$16 million requested under the former presidents fund, nearly \$3 million has been slated for staff salary and benefits, according to GSA budgeting documents.

The documents do not list the names or positions of the former presidents' federally paid employees. But sources say that several Bill Clinton staffers who have been paid through the

GSA have also been paid through the foundation or his personal office. They include Doug Band, the former White House aide who previously helped run the foundation's Clinton Global Initiative, and senior foundation official Laura Graham, whose foundation salary increased from \$74,000 in 2005 to more than \$180,000 in 2013, according to tax filings. Another Clinton insider believed to have been on the GSA payroll is Bill Clinton's chief of staff Tina Flournoy, a former union official who advised Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign and whose arrival on her husband's staff in 2012 was seen by some insiders "as Hillary's planting a sentinel," according to a report in *New York* magazine.

Band and Flournoy declined to comment, while Graham could not be reached.

A representative for Clinton in 2001 told the Government Accountability Office that, in addition to the GSA money, "some staff compensation will be paid by the former president and his presidential foundation," according to a 2001 GAO report. It made clear that most employees on the GSA payrolls of former presidents "also receive compensation from other sources."

The GSA records used in POLITICO's analysis — which include annual congressional appropriations requests, as well as enacted budget figures and information provided to Congress — shed light on the Clintons' operation but also left unanswered questions.



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Among the federal payments revealed are \$947,000 for communications-related costs and "equipment" — an expense category which, according to a 2014 Congressional Research Service report, could include everything from furniture to "information technology hardware or software."

GSA officials did not respond to questions about specific items, services or salaries funded by the act.

Although the Clintons footed the bill for the server used in their private email address, taxpayers indirectly have footed the bill to protect the server. That's because it's located at the Clintons' suburban New York home, and, as such, is guarded — along with the rest of the property — by the Secret Service.

Addressing the matter in a Tuesday news conference, Hillary Clinton said, "The system we used was set up for President Clinton's office. And it had numerous safeguards. It was on

property guarded by the Secret Service. And there were no security breaches.”

The Secret Service provides lifetime protection for Clinton and other former presidents and their widows. That protection, for which the Secret Service does not disclose costs for security reasons, is separate from the perks provided under the Former Presidents Act.



ON POLITICO MAGAZINE

The Clintons' Tricky Way With Words

JACK SHAFER

The act was passed in 1958 to “maintain the dignity” of the presidency by subsidizing the correspondence of former commanders in chief and keeping them from falling on hard times, like those faced by Harry S. Truman. After leaving office in 1953, Truman acknowledged that he was living largely off proceeds from the sale of his father’s farm. In a 1957 letter to House Speaker Sam Rayburn, Truman predicted that, without some federal assistance, he would be forced to “go ahead with some contracts to keep ahead of the hounds,” according to Marie B. Hecht’s 1976 book “Beyond the Presidency: The Residues of Power.”