

# The Worst Perversion

NR [nationalreview.com/article/443911/obamas-many-scandals-abuse-government-power-worse-sex-scandals](https://nationalreview.com/article/443911/obamas-many-scandals-abuse-government-power-worse-sex-scandals)

The Obama administration was full of scandal, though we have a lazy and partisan news media that is determined to see no scandal in it.

The lame-duck columns have been nearly unanimous on the point: Barack Obama is remarkable among recent presidents for having been utterly untouched by scandal, personal or political.

The personal can be conceded: There is no serious allegation that President Obama suffered from the liberated appetites of a Bill Clinton, and the White House interns have by all accounts gone unmolested. But this is hardly remarkable: There were no such allegations about George W. Bush, either, or about George H. W. Bush, or about Ronald Reagan, or Jimmy Carter. Richard Nixon's name is a byword for scandal, but not scandal of that sort. Nixon's shocking personal perversion was his taste for cottage cheese with ketchup.

So, three cheers for Barack Obama's manful efforts to live up to the standard of Gerald Ford. Well done.

The political issue is a different question entirely.

Not only was the Obama administration marked by scandal of the most serious sort — perverting the machinery of the state for political ends — it was on that front, which is the most important one, the most scandal-scarred administration in modern presidential history.

For your consideration:

Under the Obama administration's watch, the Internal Revenue Service and other federal agencies from the BATF to the NLRB were illegally used to target and harass the president's political enemies. The IRS targeting scandal was the most high-profile of these, but others are just as worrisome. Federal investigations and congressional oversight were obstructed, and investigators were lied to outright — a serious crime. The administration protected the wrongdoers and saw to it that they retired with generous federal pensions rather than serving federal sentences for their crimes.

The Obama administration oversaw the illegal sale of arms to Mexican traffickers for purposes that to this date have not been adequately explained, and those guns have been used to murder American law-enforcement officers.

President Obama's secretary of state was involved in a high-profile case in which she improperly set up a private e-mail system to evade ordinary governmental oversight; she and her associates routinely misled investigators, obstructed investigations, and hid or destroyed evidence. These are all serious crimes.

The Obama administration made ransom payments to the Iranian government and lied about having done so.

Under the Obama administration, the Secret Service has been a one-agency scandal factory, from drunk agents driving their cars into White House barriers to getting mixed up with hookers in Cartagena.

Under the guise of developing “green” energy projects, the Obama administration shunted money to politically connected cronies at Solyndra and elsewhere.

Obama’s men at the Veterans Administration oversaw a system in which our servicemen lost their lives to bureaucratic incompetence and medical neglect, and then falsified records to cover it up.

Under the flimsiest of national-security pretexts, the Obama administration used the Department of Justice to spy on Fox News reporter James Rosen. It also spied on the Associated Press.

The Obama administration’s attorney general, Eric Holder, left office while being held in contempt of Congress for inhibiting the investigation of other Obama administration scandals.

But, no: No embarrassing stain on a blue dress.

Without minimizing the authentic personal degeneracy of Bill Clinton, sexual scandals are minor concerns. They become large public scandals because the numbskulls understand sex and can relate to sexual infidelity. If you’ve ever tried explaining to someone how futures trading works and watched his expression turn to that of a taxidermied mule deer, then you know why it is Bill Clinton, and not Hillary Clinton, who is the face of scandal.

It is one thing to have a degenerate president. It is something else — something far worse — to have a degenerate government. Barack Obama may have spent the past eight years as sober as a Sunday morning (his main vice, we are told, is sneaking cigarettes) and straight as a No. 2 pencil, but he leaves behind a government that is perverted.

The BATF harassment of True the Vote and other Obama-administration enemies is the stuff of which banana republics are made.

A liberal society with decent government requires that the *pursuit* of political power be insulated from the *exercise* of political power. That is why we have a Hatch Act and why the various dreams of the would-be campaign-finance police — who would have congressmen and presidents write the rules under which congressmen and presidents may be criticized and challenged — are in reality nightmares. (Here, let us say a word of thanks for the First Amendment and *Citizens United*.) Having an IRS that sorts nonprofits by their political stances in order to facilitate the harassment of political rivals is in real terms far worse than anything Bill Clinton got up to with Monica Lewinsky, and far worse than the shenanigans that Gordon Liddy and the rest of the Nixon henchmen got up to in the Watergate. The BATF harassment

of True the Vote and other Obama-administration enemies is the stuff of which banana republics are made. Using the machinery of the state to seek political power and to aggrandize the political power one holds is the most destructive form of political corruption there is. A sane society would prosecute it the way we prosecute murder or armed robbery. It is a scandal and more than that: It is an assault on the foundations of a free society.

The fact that the same people at CNN who were colluding with the Clinton campaign cannot see a scandal in the Obama administration does not mean that no scandal was there.

For the Democrats and their media partisans, scandals — like homelessness and war casualties — are something that happens to other people.

— *Kevin D. Williamson is National Review's roving correspondent.*