Podesta Emails Reveal He's A Home For The Anti-Vaccination Movement

By Hank Campbell — October 14, 2016

It's long been known in the United States that anti-vaccine sentiment comes down along political lines the same way climate change does. Anti-vaccine sentiment also correlates strongly with anti-agriculture and anti-energy beliefs. But the rationalization among most journalists who didn't want to recognize such uncomfortable truths was that as long as their political elites were not saying it, it didn't count.(1)

Thus, when Mr. Trump made the maddening claim that vaccines cause autism, the issue became suddenly framed as not even bipartisan, but solely a right-wing position [1]. Yes, President Obama had said the same thing in 2008 but Democratic contender Secretary Clinton was not saying it in 2016.

Healthy young child goes to doctor, gets pumped with massive shot of many vaccines, doesn't feel good and changes - AUTISM. Many such cases!


However, recent evidence shows that a year after Trump wrote that, anti-vaccine sentiment was not only still in existence among one side of the aisle when journalists denied it, it is prevalent in the most partisan, anti-science groups in the country: the environmental movement. While most of the political community has been sifting through the Wikileaks emails of Secretary Clinton’s national campaign chairman John Podesta to find conspiracies related to deflecting blame about
various issues or engineer a political victory, Stephan Neidenbach\(^3\) has been painstakingly going through them to see what it reveals about science. (2)

He found that it doesn't look good for the kind of evidence-based decision-making the American public needs from its leadership. Instead, it looks like all of the worst ideological fads of donors could make their way into policy. Prior to running the new Clinton campaign, (3) Podesta was Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton and Counselor to President Barack Obama so he has long been involved at the highest levels of government. The emails show he maintains a sympathetic ear for every anti-science belief - UFOs, anyone? - and even promoted some of his own, like that GMOs cause migraine headaches\(^4\). And now is also a safe space for vaccine scaremongering.

Below is an example, an exchange with Wendy Abrams, friend of Tom Steyer and large donor to both the Clinton Foundation\(^5\) and the Clinton campaign\(^6\). Abrams is the ideal fit for Environmental Defense Fund\(^7\), Natural Resources Defense Council\(^8\), Union of Concerned Scientists\(^9\) (4), the Coalition for Mercury Free Drugs\(^10\) and more because she is rich, politically reliable and embodies all of the correct anti-science positions.

Here is what she wrote to Podesta in July of 2015\(^{11}\) (bold mine):

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Now, I will make you a bet.. I bet that taking thimerosal out of flu shots that we give to pregnant women will reduce the number of children afflicted with mercury poisoning, autism and other neurological disorders. If I am right, we will improve the health of one million kids/year and lower health care costs by hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade. If I am wrong, well… we are no worse off because pregnant women didn’t get thimerosal, and so I’m wrong. I’ll buy you lunch.
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Obviously this is bizarre to people who understand science, but not a single one of the groups mentioned above are going to be critical of her fringe beliefs, much less stop cashing her checks, despite the fact that her botched understanding of both medicine and biology damages the health of children worldwide. There is zero evidence that anything she speculates about could be true, there is not even a biological hypothesis for how it could be true.

Sorry that medicine disappoints you because vaccines don't prevent autism, Wendy, but that is just reality - some kids will get it even though they got a vaccine\(^{12}\). They only prevent the diseases they are designed to prevent.

**NOTES:**
Seth Mnookin, however, is immune to partisan truth massage. "I talked to a public health official and asked him what's the best way to anticipate where there might be higher than normal rates of vaccine noncompliance, and he said take a map and put a pin wherever there's a Whole Foods. I sort of laughed, and he said, "No, really, I'm not joking." It's those communities with the Prius driving, composting, organic food-eating people."

It's telling about what environmentalists really think about science among their close allies. If you read the American Council on Science and Health, of course you knew that. They have created a billion dollar financial juggernaut undermining science and terrifying the public about everything from medicine to fertilizer.

In between, he created the Center for American Progress, which most recently was the source of some of the more incendiary hate speech emails about Catholics and evangelicals.

Namely not being a scientist. Kevin Knobloch built them into a real progressive powerhouse criticizing President George W. Bush and then got rewarded with a job in the Obama administration, and EPA did the same for Francesca Grifo, naming her as "Scientific Integrity Officer."

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