

Clinton papers on Lewinsky, others released (Update)

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Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, smiles as she talks with supporters at a Barnes & Noble bookstore in Chicago, Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2014. Clinton visited Chicago for two appearances, including a speech to a business group, and to stump for Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn in his bid for re-election. (AP Photo/ Nam Y. Huh)

The White House strategy to defend President Bill Clinton against the political fallout of his affair with intern Monica Lewinsky is detailed in

documents the National Archives released Friday, part of a batch of records that might shed light on painful chapters in Hillary Rodham Clinton's life as she ponders another bid for the presidency.

The papers include lists of talking points, questions prepared for media interviews and efforts to defend the president against impeachment, part of 10,000 pages of records being released from the Clinton administration. The documents did not appear to reveal any new information that might affect a potential Hillary Clinton campaign.

Many records involving Lewinsky are redacted, but one document sheds light on her job: Lewinsky sent an official request to hang a picture of Clinton, signing a telecommunications bill, in a White House legislative affairs office. Behind the scenes, Clinton officials were adamant that they were not trying to discredit Lewinsky.

"There is no evidence whatsoever that the White House was directing or involved in any campaign against her," Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal wrote in a January 1999 memo.

In addition to the 1990s-era events, the papers touch on Elena Kagan, now a Supreme Court justice, who as a White House counsel defended Bill Clinton in the lawsuit brought by ex-Arkansas state employee Paula Jones. Clinton's testimony for the Jones lawsuit, in which he denied a sexual relationship with Lewinsky, led to his impeachment in 1998. The House approved two articles of impeachment against Clinton, but he was acquitted by the Senate.

Hillary Clinton's influence in the White House is also expected to be explored in the papers, from her role on Clinton's unsuccessful health care overhaul plan to her 2000 Senate campaign in New York. Bill Clinton left office in January 2001.

Past installments have offered an unvarnished look at Bill Clinton's two terms, detailing his unsuccessful attempt to change the health care system, Republicans' sweeping victories in the 1994 midterm elections and the shaping of his wife's public image.

Hillary Clinton, who went on to serve as a senator from New York and as President Barack Obama's secretary of state, now is a powerful advocate for Democrats in the midterm elections and the leading Democratic prospect for president in 2016. The possibility of a presidential campaign has heightened interest in the documents by media organizations, political opposition researchers and historians.

The papers touch on the Whitewater investigation into Bill and Hillary Clinton's land dealings in Arkansas, the 1993 death of Deputy White House Counsel Vincent Foster and pardons Bill Clinton granted in the final hours as president.

The papers show that the Republican-led investigation into Foster's suicide infuriated the White House, which tried to recruit bestselling author William Styron to write a piece critical of the probe. Clinton communications specialists even drafted a piece for the novelist and author of a memoir of his own depression. It is unclear if the piece was ever published.

With these documents the National Archives will have released about 30,000 pages of papers since February. Both the Obama White House and the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Arkansas, have signed off on their release.

Some of the memos are devoted to one of the Clintons' longest-running political roller coasters: the Whitewater real estate saga. As the case threatened to mushroom into a scandal, the president, first lady and their circle of advisers hatched a strategy to convince the public the Clintons

had done nothing wrong—and had nothing to hide.

Some advocates, suggesting the Clintons step before the cameras to make their case, provided a point-by-point primer.

"In this situation, the Clintons' attitude is their message. They must be relaxed, open and forthcoming. Any sense of bitterness, anger or righteous indignation will not work," said a March 11, 1994, memo written by Clinton adviser Paul Begala. "No matter how justified some of our feelings on this may be, this will be the first time most Americans will hear directly from the president and first lady."

"Discussion of plots, pain and personal injustice could strike some viewers as self-serving or just plain weird," he continued. "The most important point to stress is that we have nothing to hide, we are fully complying with an independent investigation."

The Clintons were never implicated in the Whitewater case, but their real estate partners, Jim and Susan McDougal, were convicted in a trial that also resulted in the conviction of then-Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker.

The documents touch on financier Marc Rich, who was indicted on fraud and other charges in 1983. He fled to Switzerland and was later pardoned on Clinton's last day in office. Quinn, who had left the White House by then, suggests in a handwritten note that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak discussed a pardon directly with Clinton.

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