

# Here are the latest, most damaging things in the DNC's leaked emails

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By **Aaron Blake** July 25 at 11:03 AM

*This post has been updated.*

Thousands of leaked emails have sealed the fate of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz's uneven five-plus-year tenure as DNC chair.

Wasserman Schultz's resignation announcement Sunday afternoon comes as a bad situation just keeps getting worse -- and appears as though it might continue to do so. That's because WikiLeaks has so far released nearly 20,000 emails, new details are still being discovered, and there is still the prospect of additional, damaging emails coming to light.

Many of the most damaging emails suggest the committee was actively trying to undermine Bernie Sanders's presidential campaign. Basically all of these examples came late in the primary -- after Hillary Clinton was clearly headed for victory -- but they belie the national party committee's stated neutrality in the race even at that late stage.

Below is a running list of the most troublesome findings for Wasserman Schultz and her party. As new revelations come out, we'll update it.

## 1) Targeting Sanders's religion?

On May 5, DNC officials appeared to conspire to raise Sanders's faith as an issue and press on whether he was an atheist -- apparently in hopes of steering religious voters in Kentucky and West Virginia to Clinton. Sanders is Jewish but has previously indicated that he's not religious.

One email from DNC chief financial officer Brad Marshall read: "It might make no difference, but for KY and WVA can we get someone to ask his belief. Does he believe in a God. He had skated on saying he has a Jewish heritage. I think I read he is an atheist. This could make several points difference with my peeps. My Southern Baptist peeps would draw a big difference between a Jew and an atheist."

Marshall added in a later email: "It's these Jesus thing."

In response, CEO Amy Dacey said: "Amen."

## **2) Wasserman Schultz calls top Sanders aide a "damn liar"...**

On May 17, after controversy erupted over the Nevada state Democratic convention and how fair the process was there, Wasserman Schultz herself took exception to Sanders campaign manager Jeff Weaver's defense of his candidate's supporters.

"Damn liar," she wrote. "Particularly scummy that he barely acknowledges the violent and threatening behavior that occurred."

## **3) ... and says Sanders has "no understanding" of the party**

That wasn't the only time Wasserman Schultz offered an unvarnished opinion about the Sanders operation. And in one late-April email, she even questioned Sanders's connection to the party.

"Spoken like someone who has never been a member of the Democratic Party and has no understanding of what we do," she said in response to a Politico story about Sanders saying the party hadn't been fair to him.

Sanders, for what it's worth, wasn't a Democrat before entering the Democratic primary. He caucused with the party but has long been an independent.

In that way, Wasserman Schultz's comments could be read simply as her defending her party; Sanders was attacking the party, after all. But her comment also suggests a particularly dim view of Sanders that she didn't feel the need to obscure in conversations with other DNC staff.

## **4) A Clinton lawyer gives DNC strategy advice on Sanders**

When the Sanders campaign alleged that the Clinton campaign was improperly using its joint fundraising committee with the DNC to benefit itself, Clinton campaign lawyer Marc Elias offered the DNC guidance on how to respond.

"My suggestion is that the DNC put out a statement saying that the accusations the Sanders campaign are not true," Elias said May 3 in response to an email about the issue sent by communications director Luis Miranda to other DNC staff that copied Elias and another lawyer at his firm, Perkins Coie.

Elias continued: "The fact that CNN notes that you aren't getting between the two campaigns is the problem. Here, Sanders is attacking the DNC and its current practice, its past practice with the POTUS and with Sec Kerry. Just as the RNC pushes back directly on Trump over 'rigged system', the DNC should push back DIRECTLY at Sanders and say that what he is saying is false and harmful the the Democratic party."

Elias's guidance isn't perhaps all that shocking; he's Clinton's lawyer, after all. But the fact that he was talking to the DNC about how to respond would appear to suggest coordination between the DNC and Clinton campaign against Sanders in this particular case.

## **5) Plotting a narrative about how Sanders's campaign failed**

On May 21, DNC national press secretary Mark Paustenbach suggested pushing a narrative that Sanders "never ever had his act together, that his campaign was a mess."

After detailing several arguments that could be made to push that narrative, Paustenbach concludes: "It's not a DNC conspiracy, it's because they never had their act together."

Paustenbach's suggestion, in that way, could be read as a defense of the committee rather than pushing negative information about Sanders. But this is still the committee pushing negative information about one of its candidates.

## **6) Mocking Sanders for his California debate push**

One of the chief complaints from Sanders and his supporters was a lack of debates. They said the fact that there were so few was intended to help Clinton by reducing her opponents' exposure and their chances to knock her down.

After the Sanders campaign presumptuously declared that an agreement for an additional debate in California had been reached, Miranda responded to the Sanders campaign's release on May 18 simply:

"lol"

As noted, the release from the Sanders campaign was presumptuous in declaring that an agreement had been reached. Miranda could simply have been responding to the somewhat-silly tactic. But the debate never actually happened, as the Clinton campaign later opted not to participate.

## **7) Wishing Sanders would just end it**

Many of these emails came as it was clear Clinton was going to win -- which makes the apparent favoritism perhaps less offensive (though Sanders supporters would certainly disagree).

But it's also clear that there was plenty of cheerleading for the race to simply be over -- for Sanders to throw in the towel so that Clinton could be named the presumptive nominee. The party, of course, was still supposed to be neutral even though the odds and delegate deficit for Sanders looked insurmountable.

On May 1, in response to Sanders again saying he would push for a contested convention, Wasserman Schultz said, "So much for a traditional presumptive nominee."

## **8) Calling an alleged Sanders sympathizer a "Bernie bro"**

The term "Bernie bro" -- or "Berniebro," depending on your style -- over the course of the campaign became a kind of shorthand for the worst kind of Sanders supporter. These were the supporters who couldn't be reasoned with and verbally assaulted opponents, sometimes in very nasty ways.

Some in the DNC apparently used the pejorative to refer to one particular radio host seen as overly sympathetic to Sanders, Sirius XM's Mark Thompson.

"Wait, this is a s--- topic," Miranda wrote on May 4 after Thompson's program director, David Guggenheim, requested an interview on a Clinton fundraising controversy. "Where is Guggenheim? Is he a Bernie Bro?"

"Must be a Bernie Bro," DNC broadcast booker Pablo Manriquez responds. "Per Mark's sage, I turned him down flat (and politely) and inquired into opportunities next week to talk about something else.

## **9) Criticizing Obama for lack of fundraising help -- "That's f---ing stupid"**

While the Sanders emails have gained the most attention, some of the more interesting emails involve a peek behind the curtain of how party officials talk about fundraising and major donors -- and even President Obama.

In one email on May 9, DNC mid-Atlantic and PAC finance director Alexandra Shapiro noted that Obama wouldn't travel 20 minutes to help the party secure \$350,000 in donations.

"He really won't go up 20 minutes for \$350k?" Shapiro wrote. "THAT'S f---ing stupid."

DNC national finance director Jordan Kaplan responded: "or he is the president of the united states with a pretty big day job."

## **10) Flippant chatter about donors**

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In a [May 16](#) exchange about where to seat a top Florida donor, Kaplan declared that "he doesn't sit next to POTUS!" -- referring to Obama.

"Bittel will be sitting in the sh---iest corner I can find," [responded Shapiro](#). She also referred to other donors as "clowns."

Here are some other things Kaplan and Shapiro said about donors, [via Karen Tumulty and Tom Hamburger](#):

Kaplan directed Shapiro to put New York philanthropist Philip Munger in the prime spot, switching out Maryland ophthalmologist Sreedhar Potarazu. He noted that Munger was one of the largest donors to Organizing for America, a nonprofit that advocates for Obama's policies. "It would be nice to take care of him from the DNC side," Kaplan wrote.

Shapiro pushed back, noting that Munger had given only \$100,600 to the party, while the Potarazu family had contributed \$332,250.

In one email attachment from Erik Stowe, the finance director for Northern California, to Tammy Paster, a fundraising consultant, he lists the benefits given to different tiers of donors to the Democratic National Convention, which starts next week in Philadelphia. The tiers range from a direct donation of \$66,800 to one of \$467,600 to the DNC. The documents also show party officials discussing how to reward people who bundle between \$250,000 to \$1.25 million.

*Correction: This post initially referred to Guggenheim as the host of a Sirius XM show. He is program director for Sirius XM host Mark Thompson.*

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