

John Podesta

John David Podesta (born January 8, 1949) is the chairman of the 2016 Hillary Clinton presidential campaign.^[1] He previously served as chief of staff to President Bill Clinton and Counselor to President Barack Obama.^[2]

He is the former president, and now Chair and Counselor, of the Center for American Progress (CAP), a liberal think tank in Washington, D.C., as well as a Visiting Professor of Law at the Georgetown University Law Center. Additionally, he was a co-chairman of the Obama-Biden Transition Project.^{[3][4]}

1 Early life

Podesta spent most of his early years in Chicago, where he was born, growing up in the neighborhood of Jefferson Park on the city's Northwest Side.^[5] His mother, Mary (née Kokoris), was Greek-American, and his father, John David Podesta, Sr., was Italian-American.^[6] Tony Podesta, a lobbyist, is his brother.^{[7][8]} Podesta's father did not graduate from high school, but encouraged Podesta to attend college.^[9]

In 1967, Podesta graduated from Lane Tech High School in Chicago. In 1971, he graduated from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he had served as a volunteer for the presidential candidacy of Eugene McCarthy.^[9] He received his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 1976. Podesta worked as a trial attorney for the Department of Justice's Honors Program in the Land and Natural Resources Division (1976–77), and as a Special Assistant to the Director of ACTION, the Federal volunteer agency (1978–1979). His political career began in 1972, when he worked for George McGovern's presidential campaign, which lost in 49 states.^[10]

2 Career

Podesta held positions on Capitol Hill, including Counselor to Democratic Leader Senator Thomas Daschle (1995–1996); Chief Counsel for the Senate Agriculture Committee (1987–1988); Chief Minority Counsel for the United States Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks; Security and Terrorism; and Regulatory Reform; and Counsel on the Majority Staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee (1979–1981). In 1988, he and his brother Tony co-founded Podesta Associates, Inc., a Washington, D.C., “government rela-

tions and public affairs” lobbying firm. Now known as the Podesta Group, the firm “has close ties to the Democratic Party and the Obama administration [and] has been retained by some of the biggest corporations in the country, including Wal-Mart, BP and Lockheed Martin.”^[11]

2.1 The Clinton years



Podesta in 1993

Podesta served as both an Assistant to the President and as Deputy Chief of Staff. Earlier, from January 1993 to 1995, he was Assistant to the President, Staff Secretary and a senior policy adviser on government information, privacy, telecommunications security and regulatory policy. In 1998 he became President Clinton's Chief of Staff in the second Clinton Administration and executed the position until the end of Clinton's time in office in January 2001. Podesta encouraged Executive Order 12958 which led to efforts to declassify millions of pages from the U.S. diplomatic and national security history.^[12]



Podesta meeting with Bill Clinton and Georgetown University president John J. DeGioia in 2006

3 Recent years

In 2003, Podesta founded the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in Washington, D.C., and served as its president and CEO until he stepped down in 2011 (CAP chief operating officer Neera Tanden succeeded Podesta as president and CEO, taking over day-to-day operations).^{[13][14]} Podesta remained chairman of the nonexecutive board of directors for a time,^{[14][14][15]} and remains on the board today, although not as chairman.^[16]

Podesta has taught at his alma mater, Georgetown University Law Center, many times over the years,^[17] teaching classes on congressional investigations, law and technology, legislation, copyright and public-interest law.^{[17][18]} On the Georgetown faculty, Podesta's title is Distinguished Visitor from Practice.^[18]

From 2002–14, Podesta served as a member of the Constitution Project's bipartisan Liberty and Security Committee.^[19] In 2008, he authored *The Power of Progress: How America's Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate, and Our Country*. In 2009, he accompanied former President Bill Clinton to North Korea for negotiations securing the release of two American journalists imprisoned on espionage charges. He can be seen in numerous widely circulated photographs of Clinton meeting with Kim Jong-il.^[20]

Podesta opposes the excessive use of classification, and in a 2004 speech at Princeton University condemned what he called the U.S.'s "excessive government secrecy" and "bloated secrecy bureaucracy."^[21] Podesta has called Executive Order 12958, "which set tough standards for classifying documents and led to the unprecedented effort to declassify millions of pages from our nation's diplomatic and national security history," as "perhaps the biggest accomplishment of the Clinton administration."^[21] More than 800 million pages of intelligence documents were declassified as part of the program.^[22]

Podesta is described as "a longtime advocate for government disclosure of UFO files."^[23] Podesta has supported petitions by some who believe UFOs are alien

spacecraft to the government to release files related to the subject. At a 2002 news conference organized by Coalition for Freedom of Information Podesta stated that, "It is time for the government to declassify records that are more than 25 years old and to provide scientists with data that will assist in determining the real nature of this phenomenon."^[24] Podesta wrote the forward for a book by Leslie Kean titled "UFOs- Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go On The Record". The book details numerous contact events by these trained personnel.^[25]



John Podesta testifies before the Senate Budget Committee Task Force on Government Performance

Podesta became an honorary patron of the University Philosophical Society in March 2006. Podesta is an emeritus member of the Knox College Board of Trustees.^[26]

Currently, he is the U.S. representative to the UN High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.^[27]

Podesta has served on the board of directors of Bedford, Massachusetts-based energy company Joule Unlimited since January 2011.^{[28][29]} He has also served on the board of the Portland, Oregon-based Equilibrium Capital.^[28] In 2013, Podesta earned \$90,000 as a consultant to the West Chester, Pennsylvania-based HJW Foundation, a nonprofit group led by Swiss billionaire Hansjörg Wyss.^[28]

4 Podesta email leak

Main article: Podesta emails

On October 7, 2016, WikiLeaks started to publish thousands of emails reportedly retrieved from Podesta's private Gmail account.^[30] Podesta and the Clinton campaign did not confirm or deny the authenticity of the emails^{[31][32]} and along with others have stated that the Russian government is behind the leaks. The United States Intelligence Community released a statement directly accusing Russian intelligence of involvement.^{[33][34][35][36][37]} Vice President Joe Biden told NBC News Friday that "we're sending a message"

to Russian President Vladimir Putin and that the wide-ranging “clandestine” cyber operation will take place.^[38] *The New York Times* reported that when asked, president Putin replied that Russia was being falsely accused. “The hysteria is merely caused by the fact that somebody needs to divert the attention of the American people from the essence of what was exposed by the hackers.”^{[39][40]}

5 Personal life

John Podesta identifies himself as a Catholic and has worked closely with Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good and Catholics United.^{[41][42]} He and his wife Mary Podesta, a Washington, D.C. attorney, have three children.^[43] Podesta cooks as a hobby, specializing in Italian dishes such as risotto and biscotti.^{[44][45]}

6 References

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7 Further reading

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8 See also

- Podesta Group

9 External links

- Founder and Chair of the Center for American Progress
- Faculty profile at Georgetown Law School
- Profile at the U.S. Department of State
- Appearances on C-SPAN
- John Podesta at the Internet Movie Database
- Works by or about John Podesta in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
- “John Podesta collected news and commentary”. *Bloomberg News*.
- John Podesta collected news and commentary at *The Washington Post*

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