Will We Allow Clinton to Redefine the Presidency?

February 11, 1998

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

The current Clinton crisis has significance far beyond his lame-duck years. At stake is whether the White House will become a public relations vehicle for lying and polling, akin to a television show, or will remain a platform for the principled articulation of policies and values that Americans respect.

The American people have always had a reverence for the presidency, even though many men who held the office were less worthy than we expected. But Clinton has converted the once-serious offense of lying to the American public into a daily rite to be practiced and perfected (from Filegate to Asian political donations to Bosnian deadlines).

Finally, Senator John Ashcroft has stepped out from the pack and said what needed to be said: "Mr. President, if these allegations are true, you have disgraced yourself, you have disgraced the country, you have disgraced the office, and you should leave."

While most other Republicans mistakenly discuss short-term political impact, Senator Ashcroft recognizes that the presidency itself is now at stake. Will allowing Clinton to continue in office establish a precedent that dooms our children and grandchildren to suffer under future presidents who occupy the White House because of their skill at lying on television?

Will we allow our tradition of the rule of law to die under Clinton's poll-pandering? As Sen. Ashcroft said, "It is time for us to worry less about what is right for the party and more about teaching our kids what's right and what's wrong."

At the center of the current Clinton crisis is the affidavit by Monica Lewinsky, which is allegedly perjured and was allegedly suborned by Clinton. Unnoticed by many, including, apparently, Ken Starr's investigation, is that the circumstances surrounding Lewinsky's affidavit are remarkably similar to the obstruction of justice proved in the other civil suit against Clinton -- Hillary Clinton, that is.

In Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS) v. Hillary Rodham Clinton, the plaintiffs sought discovery regarding the Health Care Task Force and Working Groups, which developed the master plan for the Administration's attempt to take over the health care industry. One or both Clintons apparently arranged for the submission of a false sworn declaration in order to stonewall the required discovery and curtail an embarrassing civil proceeding.

The false submission in the AAPS v. Clinton lawsuit occurred shortly before Vincent Foster's death. Webster Hubbell, in his recent book, wrote that Hillary's demand that Foster "fix it" (the AAPS case) hurt him deeply and was among the reasons he committed suicide.

The actual signer of the document was given a plush job in apparent reward for misleading the court. The federal judge in AAPS v. Clinton stated in December that this decision to mislead the court was "made at the highest levels of government."

In the words of the federal court, the sworn declaration in the AAPS case was "false" and an act of "dishonesty" and "not good faith." In words that apply equally well to the submission of the Lewinsky affidavit a few weeks later, the court held that "some government officials never learn that the cover-up can be worse than the underlying conduct."

The court sanctioned the defendants, including Hillary Clinton, for $285,864.78. This was the first such penalty ever imposed against a president or first lady.

The analogies between the sworn statements in the civil actions of AAPS v. Hillary Clinton and Paula Jones v. William Clinton are striking. While Hillary parades the country making sanctimonious statements about her husband's case, the White House demands that the taxpayers pay for her judicially-determined misconduct in her own case. Soon Hillary will insist that the American taxpayers either pay for a costly appeal of the sanctions against her, and thereby risk additional sanctions, or pay the $285,864.78 on her behalf immediately.

If we care about the future of our nation, we cannot allow Bill and Hillary Clinton to define a new type of presidency in which the president and his wife are above the law. Under 18 U.S.C. 1512, tampering with witnesses is a serious crime.

In past years, numerous Courts of Appeals have enforced the witness tampering statute against defendants for engaging in conduct analogous to that of the Clintons. It would be tragic if the Clintons succeed in

converting the presidency into a public relations office that is above the law, and which requires the taxpayers to foot the bill for presidential misconduct.

The issue is not what Bill Clinton did or didn't do with Paula or Gennifer or Monica, or even who served or didn't serve on Hillary's Health Care Task Force. The issue is whether we are going to allow the president to get by with flouting the law and lying about it on television, while hiding behind his popularity in the polls.

If that precedent prevails, Americans can look forward to a succession of TV charlatans and professional liars occupying the White House.