

The below op-ed piece ran in the Orange County Register:

Letters: 'Journalistic malpractice' for Clinton visit

June 25, 2015

The Register is Orange County's hometown paper. When the probable next president visits Orange County, it is that paper's duty to report on it. But when former secretary of state Hillary Clinton visited Orange County last week, the Register failed to do so.

Instead, the Register chose to mention it in a tiny article about traffic not being affected by the visit ["Traffic rolls along amid Obama, Clinton visits," Local, June 19].

In an emailed response to my questions about why there was no news story about Ms. Clinton's visit, a Register reporter responded that they "did not cover the Newport Beach fundraiser event because it was a private event." That is a puzzling response, given that journalism's history is populated with coverage of private events. Watergate, the Camp David Accords negotiations, the Weather Undergrounds' 1960's private plans to bomb public buildings, the Pentagon Papers; all private events deserving of public attention.

A visit by the probable next president of the United States deserves coverage by our local newspaper. What happened at the event? Was it well-attended? Was it protested?

If the event was private, the Register should have simply done what reporters do all the time: Report. Make phone calls, take pictures of the candidate entering the building and take pictures of any protesters – figure it out and report.

When I first noticed that the Register failed to report on Ms. Clinton's visit, I telephoned the Register's chief political reporter, whose coverage I've always found to be unbiased. His voice mail said he was out of the office until nearly the end of June.

If the absence of the Register's chief political reporter was the reason for not covering the event, it was a reason without sound foundation. Have someone else do the reporting – but do the reporting.

The Register's explanation for not covering Ms. Clinton's visit – that the reception was "private" – sounds a false pretext in light of journalism's honorable history of reporting on private events that deserve public coverage.

The Register's failure to cover the Orange County visit of the leading candidate to be the next president of the United States was wrong.

It was a disservice to Orange County, and, frankly, it was journalistic malpractice.

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