

Statement on Signing the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Conservation and Recreation Act March 13, 2014

Today I signed the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Conservation and Recreation Act into law. This legislation protects a stunning, 35-mile stretch of Lake Michigan's coastline as a wilderness area and guarantees public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor pursuits. It also marks the first time Congress has passed a public lands designation in 5 years, ending the longest period of congressional inaction on wilderness protection in nearly 50 years. And it passed with bipartisan support, proving that protecting America's natural beauty is something leaders from both parties can get behind.

Now it's up to Congress to do even more. There are currently dozens of conservation proposals before Congress—many supported by Democrats and Republicans—that would protect important lands across the country and help grow our economy. Congress should act on these proposals, and in the meantime, I will continue to do my part to protect our Federal lands for future generations to enjoy.

NOTE: S. 23, approved March 13, was assigned Public Law No. 113-87.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Enda Kenny of Ireland and an Exchange With Reporters March 14, 2014

President Obama. Well, it is wonderful to have Taoiseach Kenny back here in the Oval Office. This is one of my favorite times of year because I'm able to join with our friends from Ireland to celebrate the incredible bond that exists between our two countries. I think it is fair to say that there are very few countries around the world where the people-to-people ties are so strong.

And in addition to sharing values and sharing a commitment to democracy, we also share these family ties that go back generations. And I want to once again thank the people of Ireland for the incredible hospitality that they showed me and Michelle and the girls each time that we've had an opportunity to visit Ireland.

I started the meeting today congratulating Taoiseach Kenny on the economic progress that's been made over the last several years in Ireland. Obviously, Ireland was hit hard by the financial crisis and problems with its banking system. It required some very tough decisions that Taoiseach Kenny was willing to take. But what we've now seen is Ireland emerge from its assistance program in a much stronger posi-

tion on the global stage and in global markets. And as a consequence, I think it's really well positioned to start building for the future and attracting businesses with a highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

And there is tremendous investment by U.S. companies in Ireland. There's tremendous investment here in the United States by Irish companies. We're an example of the mutually beneficial trade that can take place across the Atlantic. And that's why we appreciate Taoiseach Kenny being a strong leader as we move forward on the transatlantic trade agreement that is currently being negotiated between the United States and the EU.

We had an opportunity to discuss a range of global affairs. Obviously, on our minds right now is the situation in Ukraine. Ireland has been a strong voice in the European Council for the need to send a clear message of support for Ukrainian democracy and self-determination and a strong message to Russia that it should not violate the integrity and the sovereignty of its neighbor. We continue to hope that there's a diplomatic solution to be found, but the United States and Europe stand united