

more than bump up against the rights of whistleblowers. It, in fact, is going to be a chill. It will chill executive branch employees from sharing information with Congress in our congressional obligation of oversight.

It could also be construed to be an attempt to limit Members of Congress from conducting this constitutional duty. I wrote to President Obama last Friday raising my concerns with his signing statement, and, most importantly, the chilling effect that it will have on whistleblower communication with Congress.

Today, I have not received a response. However, I read in the New York Times on March 16 that an unnamed administration official stated that President Obama is "committed to whistleblower protections," and that the administration "had no intention of going further than did Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush in signing statements concerning similar provisions."

Then, what is that word "confidential" doing in there? However, that same official did not provide any detail on that additional term "confidential." I would like President Obama to answer my letter soon and clarify exactly what he meant in this signing statement. Absent a more detailed response from President Obama, I cannot see how his signing statement can be reconciled with the pledges and promises made by Candidate Obama, nor can I reconcile the criticism issued by Candidate Obama about President Bush's use of signing statements with the statements made by that unnamed administration source in the New York Times.

The unnamed source said President Obama "had no intention of going further than did President Clinton or George Bush in signing statements." Candidate Obama stated he would not use signing statements in a manner similar to President Bush to circumvent the will of Congress. Now a member of the administration is telling the New York Times that President Obama means to do exactly the same thing as President Bush in issuing signing statements.

It seems to me, if this is the case, Candidate Obama would have a problem with President Obama's use of signing statements to underline the intent of this appropriations rider on whistleblowers.

Now, a number of my colleagues were quick to object to signing statements issued by President Bush but somehow have so far remained silent regarding President Obama's use of signing statements. Well, to those who had concerns in the past, I encourage you to take a close look at this signing statement and the potential harm it will cause for Members of Congress doing our constitutional responsibility of oversight to see that the laws are faithfully executed.

Those who may believe my acts are motivated by partisan politics, I want

you to look at my record and see that I have repeatedly objected to signing statements that hindered the rights of whistleblowers. Just one example: I objected to a signing statement issued by President Bush back in 2002 that restricted the application of whistleblower protection provisions included in Sarbanes-Oxley.

I also, as another example, objected when a signing statement was issued by President Bush impacting specific reforms contained in the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008.

In closing, I call upon President Obama to revisit the March 11 signing statement and implement sections 714(1) and (2) in a manner consistent with the spirit and intent of this legislation.

As a former Senator, he must recognize the good that whistleblowers do by speaking out and by shedding light on fraud, waste, and abuse in Government agencies and programs.

Candidate Obama supported whistleblowers, but based upon his recent signing statements, these campaign promises now ring hollow. I hope I have interpreted him wrongly and will give him an opportunity to set the record right because I hope he comes out the same way he did in the campaign: strictly in support of whistleblowers, who are an essential element of the process of our checks and balances of government as Congress does its constitutional job of oversight.

We do not know where all of the skeletons are in the closet. We do not know all of the abuses of law. We do not know all of the fraudulent things that are going on in government. We need that information from whistleblowers, and the best evidence I can give you of that is the \$22 billion that has been brought back into the Federal Treasury since I got the False Claims Act of 1986 passed.

Most of that information would not have been available without the information from whistleblowers.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

OMNIBUS PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ACT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I express my strong support for

the bipartisan omnibus lands package, HR 146, which the Senate passed overwhelmingly in a floor vote. I thank Energy and Natural Resources Chairman BINGAMAN and Ranking Member MURKOWSKI for working across the aisle to put together this major piece of natural resources legislation. As many of our colleagues have noted, this legislation represents the largest public lands package in decades. Most importantly, this lands package represents a major victory for the people—and the lands—of Colorado.

There is much in this bill to highlight. All of the areas that are slated for protection under this legislation are deserving of such designation.

I have personally visited many of these places that we took action to preserve—places like Longs Peak, a mountain over 14,000 feet that looms over the great plains above Denver; the dramatic red rock canyons where water plunges to the Gunnison River from the Dominguez Canyons; and trails that climb up the steep rocky slopes of Colorado's northern Front Range looking out over the expanse of prairie that reaches to the eastern horizon.

These lands represent a variety of landscapes and natural attributes. They typify the diversity of our Nation, and their dramatic environments inspire visitors and give them a sense that anything is possible.

The connection we have to our natural landscapes and other equally important provisions—such as providing a funding mechanism for a water conduit that will help provide clean water to help enhance the productivity of farms and ranches along the lower Arkansas River—underscore why this bill is so important and worthy of our support. The areas and vital resources that are protected in this bill will help ensure a vibrant and healthy environment and thereby provide a solid foundation for a healthy and vibrant economy. This bill is not just about the special places it encompasses it is about us and our values. It deserves our support.

Specifically for Coloradans, this package will help preserve and protect majestic public landscapes in Colorado and help provide needed water supplies to communities and farmers on Colorado's productive Eastern Plains. These are issues on which I have worked for many years in the U.S. House of Representatives and now in the Senate. On behalf of the people of Colorado, I am proud that the following provisions will likely become law in the coming days.

First, the bill includes the Arkansas Valley Conduit Act of 2009. This legislation will help protect the water supply for the Arkansas River Valley's communities and productive agricultural lands by advancing the construction of the long-planned Arkansas Valley Conduit. The depressed economic status of southeastern Colorado made it a difficult financial undertaking for the region, a challenge that continues

today. This bill will help see this facility become a reality and help the farming and ranching communities in the valley continue to produce needed food for the state and Nation.

Second, the Colorado Northern Front Range Study Act included in the package will help Coloradans protect the scenic Front Range mountain backdrop in the northern Denver-metro area and the region just west of Rocky Flats.

Rising from the Great Plains, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains provides a scenic mountain backdrop to many communities in the Denver metropolitan area and elsewhere in Colorado. This mountain backdrop, which includes much of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, is an important aesthetic and economic asset for adjoining communities. It is also part of our unique culture, having beckoned settlers westward before exposing them to the harshness and humbling majesty of the Rocky Mountain West that helped define the region. The pioneers' independent spirit and respect for nature still lives with us to this day.

Yet rapid population growth is increasing recreational use of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and adding pressure to develop other lands within and adjacent to that national forest. The bill directs the U.S. Forest Service to study the ownership patterns of the lands comprising the Front Range mountain backdrop and identify areas that are open and may be at risk of development. Additionally, it directs the Forest Service to recommend to Congress how these lands might be protected and how the Federal Government could help local communities and residents to achieve that goal.

Third, the bill includes the National Trails System Willing Seller Authority Act. This act will change the current law prohibiting people who own land associated with several units of the trail system from selling those lands to the Federal Government. Because of this act, people who want to sell land for inclusion in certain units of the National Trails System will be able to do so.

Our national trails are a national treasure, and I have enjoyed them for my whole life. We should allow property owners to sell their land along these trails to the Federal Government to be part of our public lands legacy. But we must make clear that these land sales are from willing sellers.

Finally, this legislation includes the Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness and Indian Peaks Wilderness Expansion Act. This provision will designate nearly 250,000 acres of Rocky Mountain National Park as wilderness. The provision will guarantee the backcountry of Rocky Mountain National Park will be managed so that future generations will experience the park as we know it today. The legislation will also allow the National Park Service to continue its important efforts to battle the devastating bark beetle infestation and to engage in nec-

essary wildfire mitigation efforts and emergency response actions.

The wilderness designation in this bill will cover some 94 percent of the park including Longs Peak and other major mountains along the Great Continental Divide, glacial cirques and snow fields, broad expanses of alpine tundra and wet meadows, old-growth forests, and hundreds of lakes and streams.

Examples of all the natural ecosystems that make up the splendor of Rocky Mountain National Park are included in the wilderness that will be designated by this bill. At the same time, the wilderness boundaries have been drawn so as to allow continued access for the use of existing roadways, buildings and developed areas, and privately owned land.

In conclusion, the passage of this bill in the Senate and House will mark the culmination of many years of work by a number of Coloradans, and I look forward to it becoming law.

FALMOUTH VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, this week marks the Celebrate Volunteers Week at the Falmouth Volunteers in Public Schools Program, VIPS, in Falmouth, MA. I would like to take this opportunity to commend and thank those that participate in the VIPS Program which fosters interaction between the citizens of Falmouth and their public schools. Through this connection the schools are empowered to enrich their curriculum and the community at large benefits from a greater participation in their children's future.

The volunteers in this nonprofit organization log about 40,000 hours each year in support of the students, faculty, administration, and the community. This incredible effort is also supported by the business community in Falmouth that not only invests in VIPS events but also supports employee participation.

By comprehensively involving all facets of the Falmouth community VIPS enriches the lives of all involved. They provide mentoring and tutoring programs aimed at raising children's self esteem and teaching English as a second language. They have made school to business partnerships that enhance the educational experience of students by sharing resources with local businesses and bringing in guest speakers. Their innovative Cross Age Science Teaching Program matches junior high school volunteers to help elementary school students learn about electricity.

VIPS has grown from its inception in 1982, when they only had a handful of volunteers, to a robust program with over 1,100 volunteers in all 7 schools in Falmouth. When we think about improving our education system, what we need to remember is that community involvement can make a world of difference. When you get folks in the community to volunteer and become a part

of the educational process, they become invested in the success of the students. That is what is happening in Falmouth. I congratulate all of the people who have helped make the Falmouth Volunteers in Public Service a success, and I commend the work that they do.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, due to an illness, I was forced to miss the previous two rollcall votes.

The first vote was on the nomination of Elena Kagan to be the Solicitor General of the United States. The second vote was on cloture on the motion to proceed to national service bill. Had I been present for these two rollcall votes, I would have voted aye.

Elena Kagan has the qualifications and intellect to be an outstanding Solicitor General. I am proud that she is the first woman to hold this important position.

I also support the motion to proceed to the national service bill and am disappointed that it is necessary to invoke cloture to break the filibuster against this bipartisan legislation. It is important that we act to expand opportunities for Americans who volunteer their time and talents in service to their communities.●

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

REMEMBERING FALLEN POLICE OFFICERS

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it is with deep sadness that I discuss one of the deadliest attacks against California law enforcement in my State's history—an attack that took the lives of four Oakland, CA, police officers, and has left our community reeling from the shock of this terrible and senseless loss.

Every day, our law enforcement officers selflessly and bravely put their lives on the line to protect our families and our communities. If anyone, anywhere, needed a reminder of that, this tragedy puts a spotlight on the risk our police officers face every day.

On Saturday, March 21, what should have been a routine midday traffic stop for Oakland PD officers Mark Dunakin and John Hege quickly turned into a murder scene.

After fatally wounding both officers, the suspect fled the scene, leading to a frantic manhunt that involved more than 200 officers from Oakland PD, Alameda County Sheriff's Office, BART Police and the California Highway Patrol. The suspect was quickly tracked down to an apartment. But when the SWAT team entered the apartment, he fired a series of shots from inside of a closet, fatally wounding officers Daniel