

company to buy expensive cooling equipment, but that would have hurt the local economy. Instead, they decided to pay farmers and ranchers to plant trees along the banks of the river, and that helped to cool the water at a fraction of the cost. So it worked for business, it worked for farmers, it worked for salmon.

And those are the kinds of ideas that we need in this country. Ideas that preserve our environment, protect our bottom line, and connect more Americans to the great outdoors.

And this is personally important to me. Some of you know that I grew up in Hawaii mostly, and we got some pretty nice outdoors in Hawaii. *[Laughter]* And you spend a lot of time outdoors, and you learn very early on to appreciate this incredible splendor. But I remember when I was 11, I had never been to the mainland, and my grandmother and my mother and my sister, who at the time was 2, decided we were going to take a big summer trip. And we traveled across the country. And mostly we took Greyhound buses. My grandmother was getting—she had some eye problems, and so she couldn't see that well, so she was a little nervous about driving long distances. Sometimes we took the train. And we went to the usual spots, Disneyland and—yeah, I was 11, right? So—*[laughter]*.

But I still remember traveling up to Yellowstone and coming over a hill and suddenly just hundreds of deer and seeing bison for the first

time and seeing Old Faithful. And I remember that trip giving me a sense of just how immense and how grand this country was and how diverse it was. And watching folks digging for clams in Puget Sound and watching ranchers and seeing our first Americans guide me through a canyon in Arizona, and it gave you a sense of just what it is that makes America special.

And so when I went back to Yellowstone with Ken and my daughters—that was the first time they had been—and I'm standing there. I'm thinking not only about them and the first time they're seeing this, but I'm also remembering back to when my grandmother and my mother had shown me this amazing country so many years before.

And that is part of what we have to fight for. That's what's critical, is making sure that we're always there to bequeath that gift to the next generation. And if you'll work with me, I promise I'll do everything I can to help protect our economy, but also protect this amazing planet that we love and this great country that we've been blessed with.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:32 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Statement on Representative Norman D. Dicks's Decision Not To Seek Re-election

March 2, 2012

I want to thank Norm Dicks for more than 30 years of service on behalf of the people of Washington State. Norm has spent his career working to protect our national security, championing the men and women of our Armed Forces, and fighting for the many natural re-

sources of Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. Norm's dedication to our Nation's intelligence personnel and his leadership on the Appropriations Committee will be missed in Congress, and Michelle and I wish him and family well in the future.