



Opinion

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# Examiner Editorial: Kudos to Obama for letting in the sunlight

**Examiner Editorial**  
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We pause here after Independence Day to commend President Barack Obama for the significant progress he is making toward fulfillment of his “Sunlight Before Signing” promise from the 2008 presidential campaign. With SBS, Obama said he would sign no bill that came to his desk until it had been posted for five days on the White House website “so that you know what your government is doing.” This pledge could have been construed as political grandstanding because the bills would have previously been debated in Congress and presumably subjected to extensive public examination. But knowing a bill would be thus displayed on the White House website would be an important backstop against congressional attempts to circumvent public demands for greater transparency in the legislative process.

Obama’s record on this score last year was anything but encouraging, but, as the Cato Institute’s Jim Harper points out, the White House has made great strides forward so far this year. In 2009, only six of the 129 bills that made it to Obama’s desk were posted on the Internet by the White House for five days before his signing. Thus far in 2010, however, 37 of the 69 bills forwarded by Congress to Obama received the five-day posting period prior to presidential signing. Just in the month of June, 16 of the 19 bills sent to the president were thus posted.

Equally as important, the White House website has added separate sections for legislation that is pending before Congress, bills that have been signed by the chief executive, and those that he has vetoed. Each section has its own RSS feed, which means every citizen can keep up to date with what the president and Congress are doing via desktop, laptop, cell phone or other digital communications devices. The Examiner agrees with Harper that “a habit of civic awareness can take root thanks to these RSS feeds, and the administration deserves credit for implementing them, even if it has done so tardily.”

Now, Obama further promised in his SBS speech that “as president, I am going to make it impossible for congressmen or lobbyists to slip pork barrel projects or corporate welfare into laws when no one is looking, because when I am president meetings where laws are written will be more open to the public. No more secrecy, that’s a commitment I make to you as president.” He famously failed to keep this open-meetings promise with regard to C-SPAN coverage of the Obamacare negotiations. Let us hope the president soon changes course on keeping his open meetings pledge as dramatically as he did on SBS.