Private property ownership is a fundamental right. Indeed, the ability to own and use property spurs innovation and entrepreneurship and is a cornerstone of our prosperity and high standard of living. The Fifth Amendment famously protects our property rights from undue government interference stating, property shall not "be taken for public use, without just compensation." This amendment is also joined by the Fourteenth Amendment which together protects citizens from government's taking of private property "without due process of law."

We must constantly be on guard against intrusive regulations that chip away at fundamental property rights. Too often federal environmental regulations have had this effect - particularly in rural areas. I'm a strong believer that we should institute commonsense reforms to these regulations that will both provide for environmental protection but also keep secure private property rights. These need not be mutually exclusive goals.

Like many Americans, I was very disturbed with the Supreme Court's 2005 ruling in *Kelo v. City of New London, Connecticut*
where the Court held in a 5-4 decision that local governments could seize land through eminent domain and transfer it from one private property owner to another. To me, the Fifth Amendment's takings cause is unambiguous: the government's authority to take private property is specifically and clearly limited to instances when it is to be put to a public use, such as for the development of a public road or other similar infrastructure. That a slim majority of the Court interpreted "public use" to include the taking of one individual's private property and giving it to another for the purposes of economic development is a cause for great concern. By the Court's line of reasoning, states and local governments now have virtual free rein to condemn private property if it can be used for a more lucrative purpose. This is a perfect example of why it is so important to have judges on the federal bench who will interpret the Constitution as it was originally ratified. I'm a strong supporter of legislation that would restore the rights of property owners in response to this misguided ruling.

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