

GREG CRAIG WON'T TELL YOU HOW OBAMA DISAPPEARED THE WHISTLEBLOWERS

Charlie Savage has an article chronicling Chuck Grassley's objection to something I objected to last week—Obama's signing statement undermining whistleblowers.

But that's not the really creepy part of the article. The creepy part is the way some Obama Administration official, who happens to have the same legal credential and sophist argumentative technique as Greg Craig, provided input for the article.

The White House press office referred questions to an administration official, imposing the condition that he not be identified by name or title.

The official, a lawyer, said Mr. Obama was "committed to whistle-blower protections." He declined to define every kind of instance in which the president's power to keep a matter confidential would trump a whistle-blower protection statute, but he did say the administration had no intention of going further than did Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush in signing statements concerning similar provisions.

"I don't think President Obama's signing statement injects a new level of uncertainty into the law," he said.

[snip]

The administration official pointed to a memorandum Mr. Obama issued on March 9 laying out a signing statements policy. The document, which does not mention legislative intent, says he will employ

only "legitimate" interpretations of statutes. Mr. Obama's challenge in this case, the official said, is consistent with that principle.

So, let's review here: They've got Charlie Savage talking to a mysterious lawyer on the condition that the lawyer not be named. Said lawyer refuses to explain what the signing statement means for whistleblowers, but claims this doesn't create any new uncertainty. And then said lawyer asserts that the signing statement from last week was—by definition—a "legitimate" interpretation of statute, legislative intent be damned.

Yup. This is the way we bring transparency to the White House alright.

Chuck Grassley's ire at Obama's childish games with whistleblowers will remain a story, so I'm happy Savage covered it. But at some point, Obama's just as ridiculous approach to discussing legal issues with the press needs to become the story. I realize Greg Craig just recently came from William & Connolly, where the off-the-record manipulation of the press may be second nature, but he's working for the American people now, and these things he's talking about are actually supposed to be laws. It'd be really nice if Greg Craig had the decency to tell us what the laws in this country are.