

Turning Down the Heat: Negotiating Wildfire Prevention and Recovery Confidential Information for Staffer for Senator Dana Danvers

Character Sheet

Democrat Professional Staffer for Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman, Sen. Dana Danvers (D-Fremont).

Sen. Dana Danvers (D-FR)

You work for Senator Danvers, the long-serving Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Danvers is the senior senator from Fremont, one of the largest states in the nation in both size and population. Senator Danvers has built a fairly-productive relationship with the new Republican Ranking Member of the Committee, Senator Jordan Jacobs (R-Laramie), as has your team.

Senator Danvers is up for re-election in 6 months and knows that passage of the Senate bill is critical to alleviating the wildfire problem in heavily-impacted Fremont. At a time when large bipartisan deals are increasingly rare, Danvers is looking to build a legacy as someone who can work across the aisle and get meaningful things done in today's environment.

Fremont

Fremont has seen more than its share of wildfires in recent years. The state ranks number one in "most-wildfire prone states", and number two in "total potential exposure to wildfire risk in dollars," among all fifty states in the country. Fremont has been in and out of drought for the better part of the past decade, which has contributed to the increasing risk of fires. Residents of Fremont are tired of the hazy grey that has overtaken recent summers' blue skies, and they worry about the health implications of the smoke. Those who live in more suburban and rural locales increasingly worry about the unpredictability and growing scale of wildfires that threaten their homes and livelihoods. Many have

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been closely following Sen. Danvers' press conferences and releases on the *Wildfire Prevention & Recovery Act of 2018*, expecting it to significantly help solve Fremont's wildfire woes.

Your Background

You are a longtime staffer in the Senate and a current senior staffer for the Senate Agriculture Committee, with generally good relationships across both parties. You are a native of Fremont and have worked for the senator for your entire DC career, working your way up from Legislative Correspondent to Professional Staff on committee.

Your boss, Chairwoman Danvers, almost always supports the deals you make, and they tend to pass the Senate. The Chairwoman and committee staff view you as someone who delivers. The *Wildfire Prevention & Recovery Act of 2018* was one of your great successes, after putting in much hard work, many hours, and ultimately finding compromise with Republican staff on the committee. However, you were disappointed but not surprised to see that the House amended the much-negotiated bipartisan Senate bill with provisions that weaken environmental protections in favor of private interests.

Your boss is open to discussions on the House amendments to get the core Senate provisions enacted. However, Danvers has historically been opposed to aspects of all three House amendments, and was on the record this year opposing the shift of SRS funding to timber and forest products.

If this bill does not make it out of conference and get passed in this Congress, the effort dies. There is no time left to introduce another version, or get provisions included in another legislative vehicle.

Supplemental Background Emails

To: You (Danvers' Office, Senate Ag)

From: Salter, Rosemary (Danvers' Office, Senate Ag)

Date: May 23rd

Subject: WPRA Conference Agenda

Thanks for all the hard work on this. We're almost to the finish line.

Talked to Senator Danvers about how to address the House amendments going into conference. Obviously, Alvarez's office doesn't want anything to do with these new provisions, and we largely share those views with them. His vocal opposition likely strengthens our hand a bit going into the negotiation. His speech on the floor definitely made it clear how tough these amendments are for Democrats – despite some D support in the House. However, Alvarez may be willing to tank the whole conference in

order to stop legislation that contains too many Republican provisions. We'll need to be careful not to provide Alvarez *too much* ammo against these provisions or we'll run the risk of making it impossible to get his office on board with any compromises.

Fremont is really suffering, and the Ranking Member Jacobs knows that. While Jacobs and the boss were able to get the bill passed through committee and the Senate, this is still a last-chance opportunity for Jacobs to walk back some of our compromises and go chase after the House provisions. **Stay attentive to this and keep Jacobs' staff as close to the Senate negotiated & bipartisan version as possible.**

The Senator is open to negotiating on Amdt1 on roadless areas, but we should focus on forest-thinning practices and really try to remove any inclusion of eliminating roadless areas from protection if possible (expect Alvarez and other Dems to come back hard against anything on roadless roads). Amdt3 is a NO-GO for us. Although the SRS doesn't actually move funding away from the schools directly, the shifting in funding priorities won't play well at home and we'll be dealing with consequences all year. The boss is not open to negotiating #3.

Some talking points against House amendments from press team:

"Benefits timber interests at expense to local species and ecosystems. If this is meant to alleviate problems with remote communities, we should be examining alternative and less harmful solutions."

"Senate process was long, hard-fought, and fair. Let's not throw all that to waste because the House has taken a look and decided to ask for a couple private-sector handouts for one House district."

"Why do we want to loosen protections on endangered and threatened species?"

Let's get this out of conference as close to the Senate version as possible, and onto the President's desk for signing. We won't have a chance to include it any other appropriations omnibus this fall. So this is it!

If you have any questions or want to recap briefly, stop by my desk on the way over. Good luck!

Rosemary

*Rosemary Salter
Majority Staff Director
Senate Agriculture Committee
Office of Senator Dana Danvers*

To: You (Danvers' Office, Senate Ag)

From: Salter, Rosemary (Danvers' Office, Senate Ag)

Date: May 23rd

Subject: Follow up: WPRA Conference Agenda

Another thought – Alvarez's office has been all over the news the past few days talking about environmental concerns and global warming. Maybe there's a chance to bring him on board if you could reiterate our priorities re: environmental protections. Maybe get some of this language into the bill? Would really be great not to isolate him or House Ds.

RS

Rosemary Salter
Majority Staff Director
Senate Agriculture Committee
Office of Senator Dana Danvers

To: You (Danvers Office, Senate Ag)

From: Seip, Carlos (Sen. Majority Leader Alberts Office)

Date: May 23rd

Subject: LEADERSHIP: WPRA CONFERENCE

To get back to you with an answer, the Majority Leader will not be bringing a bill to the floor unless at least one House amendment, preferably more, is taken out in conference. The Leader does not wish to appear to be yielding to the House Speaker on this. It is up to you which amendment(s) are at issue and removed.

Assuming you saw the press coverage today – someone in the White House is clearly floating Chairwoman Smith trial balloon for the Ag Secretary position. Given that she would go through your committee for confirmation, does this influence our position on any of these amendments?

Let us know how else we might be able to help.

Regards,

Carlos

Carlos Seip
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