

February 23, 2021

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members and supporters from across the country, we urge you to reject the proposed restoration of earmarks being considered by House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.). Earmarks are one of the most corrupt, inequitable, and wasteful practices in the history of Congress. Dressing them up as “member-directed spending” will not change anything.

Since 1991, according to Citizens Against Government Waste’s *Congressional Pig Book*, there have been 111,417 earmarks costing taxpayers \$375.7 billion, including \$67.9 billion since the earmark moratorium was adopted in 2011. In 2006, one year after the 2005 highway bill had \$24 billion in earmarks, including the infamous Bridge to Nowhere, appropriations earmarks totaled a record \$29 billion. That was also the year Republicans lost the majority in the House of Representatives, followed soon thereafter by the incarceration of members of Congress, staff, and lobbyists as a result of the corruption associated with earmarks.

The inequitable and power-driven distribution of earmarks is demonstrated by the inclusion of the names of members of Congress who obtained earmarks in the appropriations bills during the 111th Congress. The 81 House and Senate appropriators, making up 15 percent of Congress, were responsible for 51 percent of the earmarks and 61 percent of the money. Proponents of earmarks argue that they would promote the passage of appropriations bills in a timely manner, but this is proven false by the fact that appropriations bills have been enacted on time in only four years since the passage of the 1974 Budget Act. In fact, they waste the taxpayers’ money as a form of “legalized bribery,” under which a few million dollars in earmarks are traded for votes in favor of hundreds of billions of dollars in spending. It makes no sense to believe that earmarks, which never constituted more than 1 percent of discretionary spending, would drive or control agreement on the remaining 99 percent of such spending.

Earmarks are a lazy, unfair, and corrupt way to circumvent the authorization and appropriations process. They are not a path to unity; they are a road to fiscal ruin for taxpayers.

The American people have made it clear they want business as usual to end in Washington. Earmarks for teapot museums, indoor rainforests, and bridges to nowhere should not be restored; they should be permanently banned.

Again, we urge you to be fiscally responsible and oppose any proposal to restore earmarks.

Sincerely,

Tom Schatz  
President, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Grover Norquist  
President, Americans for Tax Reform

Tim Phillips  
President, Americans for Prosperity

Pete Sepp  
President, National Taxpayers Union

David McIntosh  
President, Club for Growth

Adam Brandon  
President, FreedomWorks

Phil Kerpen  
President, American Commitment

David Williams  
President, Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Steve Ellis  
Vice President, Taxpayers for Common Sense

Michael A. Needham  
CEO, Heritage Action

George Landrith  
President, Frontiers of Freedom

Saulius "Saul" Anuzis  
President, 60 Plus Association

James L. Martin  
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Bethany Marcum  
President, Alaska Policy Forum

Jeffrey Mazzella  
President, Center for Individual Freedom

James Taylor  
President, The Heartland Institute

Kevin Waterman  
President, Annapolis Center-Right Coalition Meeting

Matthew Gagnon  
President, The Maine Heritage Policy Center