



TCS Methodology in Compiling FY08 Earmarks Database

As a result of changes made by the House of Representatives this year, the process of finding earmarks in appropriations bills has changed from previous years. The primary difference is that earmarks must be identified in the legislation along with the sponsor. For the first time, TCS had a comprehensive list of “disclosed” earmarks to work with. In our databases, any earmark or group of earmarks described as disclosed indicates one that was expressly indicated in the bill as a congressional earmark.

Disclosed projects make up a large percentage of the total earmarks in each bill, but TCS has also found a number of earmarks that we refer to as “undisclosed.” Undisclosed earmarks are provisions that meet the definition of an earmark, but aren’t expressly disclosed in the report or legislation as a congressional earmark. To find these undisclosed earmarks, TCS went through every word of every bill and included the provisions that applied in our comprehensive earmark database.

TCS defines earmarks as legislative provisions that set aside funds within an account for a specific program, project, activity, institution, or location. These measures normally circumvent merit-based or competitive allocation processes and appear in spending, authorization, tax, and tariff bills.

Another change this year is that TCS compiled databases of earmarks in both the House and Senate versions of each bill, not just the final version. This was important for a number of reasons. First, when it came to compiling the final databases for each bill, TCS started by combining together the House and Senate versions, then going through the final version to see how it compares with what each chamber had previously earmarked. As a result, we are providing a much more complete picture of the earmarking process, and the final database illustrates the amounts requested by the House and Senate for each provision. This process also allows the user to see which earmarks were not funded in the final version (those with a Senate or House request but a zero in the final funding amount column) and which were “air-dropped” or added at the last minute (those with no House or Senate request that have a funding amount).