

Earmark Database 101

How to use the comprehensive earmark database compiled by Taxpayers for Common Sense

February 14, 2008

The TCS earmarks database consists of more than 13,000 lines of data, with as many as 24 data points per line. In order to make your use of the database as fruitful as possible, the following document is intended to explain what has been most helpful for us in analyzing the information.

A quick overview of the column headers:

House and Senate request: If the earmark occurred in a House or Senate version of the appropriations bill, there will be a value in the corresponding column. No value means either the earmark did not appear in that bill or it didn't receive funding.

Pre-reduction amount: This applies only to earmarks in the omnibus bill. Many of the individual bills within the omnibus mandated an across-the-board reduction in funding. The value in this column is the amount the earmark received before that cut.

Final amount: This is the amount after the across-the-board cut or, in the case of the Defense bill which was not included in the omnibus, the final amount that appeared in the Conference version of the bill.

Budget request: The amount requested for this project in the President's FY08 budget.

Description: The description is taken directly from the legislation or report. Though we tried to be as exact as possible, not all lines will match bill and report language exactly.

City/Location, County: This information was most often gleaned from the description of the earmark, though a city or county was not identified in all cases.

State: For the most part, Congress provided the state information as part of disclosure. One large exception was in the Defense bill, where a large number of earmarks are listed as UNK, for unknown. Other abbreviations used in this column include a uniform 2 letter abbreviation for each U.S. State; UST for U.S. Territories, with the territory listed in the Notes column; DC for the District of Columbia; INT for international, with the country listed in the Notes column; National for earmarks indicated by Congress as

being national in scope; and Multi for earmarks that will go to more than one state, but the individual states cannot be determined.

Bill, Bill Section, Bill Subsection: The bill is the appropriations bill in which the earmark appears; the Bill Section roughly corresponds with the Titles of each bill; and the Bill Subsection roughly corresponds with a further delineation of where an earmark appears. These are provided as a means to make finding an earmark easier in a particular bill.

Project Heading: This is a value used only in the Defense bill.

House and Senate requesting member(s), party, state: In all cases in which an earmark is disclosed, there is a corresponding value in the House or Senate columns, or both. The name of each member provided by Congress appears in alphabetical order, separated by semi-colons. In cases where more than one member of a chamber has the same last name, first names were used (last name, first name). The information in the party and state columns corresponds with the names in the columns before it (ie. if there are four requesting members, there will be four listed party and state designations, in the same order as the names in the requesting member column).

Presidential Earmark: If there is a value in this column, it is one of the following:

- Judiciary: These were indicated by Congress to have been requested by the Judiciary branch, but were not included in the 2008 budget. These were treated by TCS as Congressional earmarks.
- President and Member(s): These are earmarks disclosed by Congress as having been requested by one or more members and the President.
- President-Solo: These are earmarks disclosed by Congress as having been requested only by the President.
- President-Solo & Und.: These are earmarks for which a Presidential request exists in the FY08 budget, but that were not disclosed by Congress as a Presidential earmark.

Undisclosed: If there is a value in this column, it is one of the following:

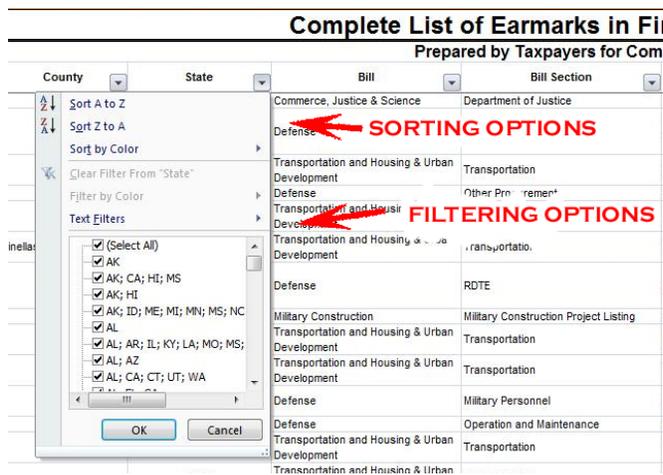
- O & M-Disclosed: These are provisions in the Energy and Water Bill under Operations and Maintenance that were not requested by the President, but were included by Congress and disclosed as such.
- O & M-Undisclosed: These are earmarks where the Senate divided Energy and Water Operations and Maintenance funding into individual projects, instead of distributing the money to 21 individual regions, as the President proposed in his budget. These provisions were not disclosed as Congressional earmarks.
- Undisclosed: These are provisions that have been determined by TCS to be earmarks, but were not disclosed by Congress as such.

Intended Recipient or Location: In some cases, TCS used information provided in the House disclosure letters to indicate what entity would be receiving the earmark funding. This column is not comprehensive and was completed for only a few bills.

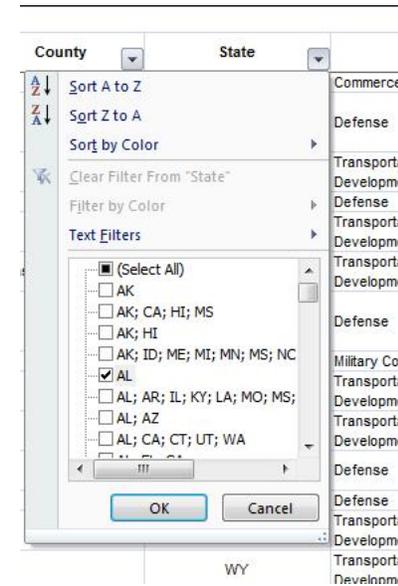
Notes: Important information that does not fit into the other columns for purposes of further explanation or clarification.

How to Use This Database¹

At the top of each column of data, there are drag down buttons that allow you to sort and filter the data in the larger database by the values contained in that column,



resulting in either a smaller filtered database or a reordered database, depending on what tool you are using. For example, at the top of the State column, if you click on the small arrow button (as pictured), you see several sorting and filtering options that will help you manipulate the data in the most useful manner for you. What follows is a quick overview of how to use these tools to sort through the TCS database.



Sorting Options

Sorting very simply resorts the database in either alpha or numeric order, depending on the data in that column. If you go to the top of the State column and hit the small arrow button, and then click on “Sort A to Z” it will sort the entire database by the values in the State column. If you do the same thing in the “Final Amount” column, and you sort “largest to smallest” it will sort the entire database by the earmark values, starting with the largest.

¹ The information presented here is for use with Microsoft Office 2007, which functions differently than older versions.

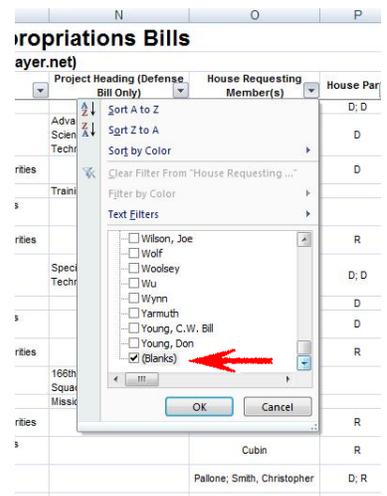
Filtering Options

Filtering is an extremely helpful and powerful tool in Microsoft Excel. The picture above shows the drag down menu if you click the filter button on the State column of the database. What shows up is a complete list of all values in that column. There is a checkbox next to every value. Clicking on “(select all)” at the top of the list will un-check all values, and you can choose just the values you want in the resulting database.

Say, for example, you want all earmarks in the state of Alabama. Start by clicking on “(select all)” to uncheck all of the boxes. Then check the box next to AL and click OK (as pictured to the left). Now, the database is filtered to show only the lines with “AL” in the earmark column. This is not necessarily all Alabama earmarks, however, but only those earmarks where AL is the ONLY value in that line. There are others, as you can see in this picture, where Alabama is included along with other states. To pull all lines of data in which AL appears in the State column, either check all of the boxes in the list in which AL appears OR use the customized text filter, as described below.

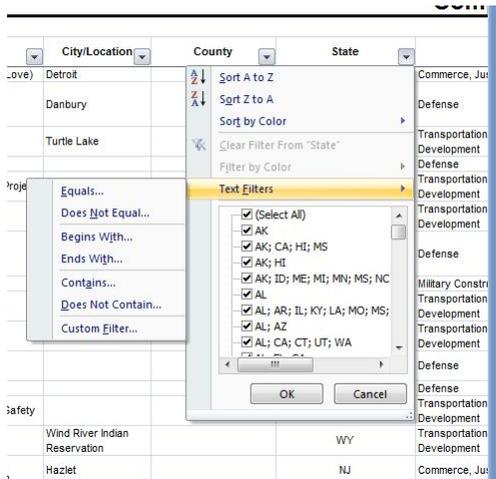
You can further refine your search by filtering the values in another column, as the second operation will only filter within the results of your original filter. An example of how to use this: Let’s say you’ve sorted by AL and narrowed the data to Alabama earmarks, but you want only those Alabama earmarks in the Defense bill. You can then do a second filter in the “Bill” column, choosing only the Defense option, and you will have narrowed the data to Defense earmarks in Alabama.

Another helpful tool is the “blank” option that appears at the end of a column values list if there are blank cells in that column. Say, for example, you uncheck all the boxes in the “House Requesting Member(s)” column, but then check the box next to blank. What results are all those earmarks WITHOUT a corresponding House requester. Conversely, if you leave all the member names checked and uncheck only the blank box, that will result in all earmarks WITH a House requester. One way to use this: under the House requesting member column, uncheck all the House names but keep blank checked; under the Senate requesting member column, keep all names checked but UNCHECK the blank. What results from this filter are all earmarks where there is a Senate requester but not a House requester.



Customized Text Filters

Perhaps even more helpful and powerful than the filter buttons are the customized text filters. When you click on a column filter and drag down to “text filters,” the following options are shown (as you can see in the picture):



Equals/Does not equal

Begins with/Ends with

Contains/Does not contain

Custom Filter

A few examples of how to use the text filters:

--if, as described above, you are looking for all lines of data in which “AL” appears in the state column, you can do a “contains” search, which will result in a filtered database containing all earmarks that are in or for Alabama.

--in most cases, the contains search works well for members of Congress as well. In some cases, however, you will use a custom filter. Let’s say you are looking for earmarks for Rep. Porter. You can go to the contains filter and search for “porter” but that will also return lines in which Rep. Shea-Porter is included. To avoid that, you can do a custom filter, which allows you to filter by two distinct rules. So in this case you could do a contains filter “porter” and a does not contain filter “shea”. The resulting database will be only earmarks for Rep. Porter.

--the equals filter will find those lines that match exactly to what you put in as your search. If you put “AL” in an equals filter, it will not return the AL; AZ lines. If you type in AL; AZ, you will get those lines but not AL and AZ separately.

An added tip: When there is more than one requesting member in a chamber or more than one state in the state column, they are always separated by a semi-colon. This helps for filtering purposes. Doing a contains filter for a semi-colon will bring up multiple request or state results; doing a does not contain filter for a semi-colon will bring up all results in which there is only one requester or state.