

Widespread Demand for Earmark Reform

Demand for increased disclosure and debate spans ideological divides

THE PROBLEM

“Earmarks are also an open invitation to corruption, since you only have to incentivise one congressman to win a fat slice of federal cash, and there are lots of legal ways to do it.”

--The Economist, January 28, 2006

http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_VQQNTRT

“As Congress became more willing to use earmarks, legions of lobbyists assembled to shepherd clients through the process.”

--Janet Hook and Richard Simon, Los Angeles Times, January 29, 2006

<http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/la-na-earmark29jan29,0,2974541.story?page=1&coll=la-headlines-politics>

“The hunt for earmarks has become so consuming that lawmakers are neglecting other duties, said Scott Lilly, who recently retired as chief Democratic aide on the House Appropriations Committee.”

--Jonathan Weisman and Charles R. Babcock, The Washington Post, January 27, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012602221.html?sub=AR>

“Earmarks don’t just waste money — though that’s reason enough to oppose them. They also join lobbyists and lawmakers at the hip. Lobbyists have made a booming business of winning earmarks for their clients, and while the tactics they use to do so don’t always cross over into Cunningham territory, sleazy, parochial influence-peddling abounds.”

--The National Review, December 15, 2005

<http://www.nationalreview.com/editorial/editors200512150624.asp>

“Lobbyists love earmarks: they are a way to smuggle pet projects into vast spending bills without even the pretence of proper oversight.”

--Adrian Wooldridge, The Economist, January 21, 2006

http://www.economist.com/people/displayStory.cfm?story_id=5411421

“[P]rojects, many of which are never openly considered, are handed out as favors in exchange for votes on key pieces of legislation by party leaders and appropriations chairmen. Alternatively, earmarks are withheld as punishment when lawmakers fail to toe the party line. In addition, earmarks are regularly slipped into legislation at the very end of the process -- during House-Senate conference deliberations.”

--Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, The Washington Post, February 3, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202606.html>

“Earmarks are not just a taxpayer-funded way for members of Congress to bring home the bacon. They are an under-the-radar opportunity for lawmakers to do lobbyists’ bidding. Those lobbyists often return the favor by raising money for lawmakers’ campaigns.”

--Orlando Sentinel, February 3, 2006

http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/orl-ed03106feb03_0,801237.story?coll=orl-opinion-headlines

“Rather than standing alone and being debated on its merits, these narrowly focused appropriations are attached to larger bills. They often get passed simply because no one knows anything about the earmark and lawmakers support the larger bill that includes the earmarks. Earmarks often amount to stealth legislation in that the public can find it impossible to find out which lawmaker is responsible for an earmark that may cost taxpayers millions of dollars.”

--Waco Tribune-Herald, February 7, 2006

<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2006/02/07/20060207waceditorial7.html>

“Many of the 15,000-plus earmarks Congress passed last year were quietly slipped into last-minute conference reports. Members thus had no opportunity to debate, amend or question them.”

--John Fund, *The Wall Street Journal*, January 23, 2006
<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110007850>

“Some congressional observers fear that the number and size of earmarks have become excessive in recent years, and it is increasingly narrow special interests that are benefiting most.”

--The Center For Public Integrity, April 7, 2005
<http://www.publicintegrity.org/lobby/report.aspx?aid=677>

“What they don't realize, though, is that the ultimate problem with earmarks isn't the amount of money spent on them directly, but the ‘anything goes’ message they send when it's time to spend the ‘real’ money on costly entitlements like Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare. Moreover, inclusion of a member's favored pork project in a spending bill makes it much less likely he'll vote against the overall bill. So if most members have personal pet projects at stake, it's almost impossible to defeat a spending bill that's too large.”

--Ed Frank, *Washington Times*, February 6, 2006
<http://washingtontimes.com/commentary/20060205-100349-9357r.htm>

“... Republicans need to get a grip on earmarks. Earmarks are the provisions that single members can stick into gigantic bills to steer spending toward favored projects. They're an invitation to corruption. If individual members of Congress can control \$100-million federal contracts or billion-dollar pork-barrel projects, then companies are going to find ways to funnel graft to those members.”

--David Brooks, *The New York Times*, January 5, 2006
<http://select.nytimes.com/2006/01/05/opinion/05brooks.html>

“A former undersecretary of defense and chief financial officer at the Defense Department, Dov Zakheim, said earmarks have the potential of sending money to projects that are not necessary instead of to projects that are.”

--Brian McGuire, *The New York Sun*, December 27, 2005
<http://www.nysun.com/article/24957>

“The earmark process has been out of control during the Bush administration, with taxpayers picking up the tab for special interests. ‘We hope that there's a recognition that it's not just lobbying,’ said Thomas A. Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste. ‘It's more a matter of how the whole process works.’”

--The Advocate/WBRZ News 2, February 6, 2006
<http://www.theadvocate.com/opinion/ourviews/2261726.html>

“Earmarks represent a looming political disaster for the GOP. Last year Congress authorized a record 13,999 earmarks.”

--John Fund, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 2006
<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110007930>

“At the root of this mess is a culture of corruption built on professional campaign financing, lobbying, pork barrel spending and influence-peddling that has been practiced over the years by both parties.”

--John Hall, *The Cincinnati Post*, January 9, 2006
<http://news.cincypost.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060109/EDIT/601090341/-1/all>

“Besides the waste contained in congressional earmarks is the problem of favoritism. Behind plenty of earmarks are special interests making backroom deals.”

--The Patriot Ledger, January 30, 2006

<http://www.patriotledger.com/articles/2006/01/30/opinion/opin01.txt>

“But it's in the late stages of the legislative process that lobbyists and lawmakers often try to have spending items "earmarked" quietly for their clients or districts - doing so furtively and at the last minute. This type of earmarking (a term derived from the tagging of farm animals such as pigs) is the worst type of pork-barrel spending[.]”

--Christian Science Monitor, February 1, 2006

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0201/p08s01-comv.html>

“Thomas A. Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste, said that 98 percent of the 3,000-plus earmarks added to a single appropriations bill last year were added in conference. Such last-minute earmarks are routinely included in a conference report that cannot be tampered with before final passage.”

--Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, The Washington Post, February 3, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202606.html>

“Capitol Hill watchdogs say the prevalence of earmarks helps foster a climate of corruption by allowing lawmakers to direct financial benefits to specific individuals, groups and businesses.”

--Liriel Higa and Steven T. Dennis, CQ Today, January 20, 2006

<http://www.cq.com/display.do?dockkey=/cqonline/prod/data/docs/html/news/109/news109-000002037866.html@allnews&metapub=CQ-NEWS&searchIndex=0&seqNum=1>

“[A]llowing lawmakers to individually decide who receives federal grants invites corruption.”

--Brian Riedl, Washington Times, January 29, 2006

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/commentary/20060128-091431-7266r.htm>

“Scott Lilly, until recently the chief Democratic aide on the House Appropriations Committee, said the lust for earmarks has become an ‘obsession’ of members from both parties.”

--John Fund, The Wall Street Journal, January 20, 2006

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110007889>

“Earmarks are the favored method of distributing pork to special-interest groups, and lobbyists sell themselves to these groups on the basis of their skill in persuading legislators to deliver specific pork products. Some of these projects may be worthwhile, but any process in which lobbyists and politicians are essentially working together to curry favor with special interests, and by extension constituents, invites corruption. The earmarking process is also done largely in secret, which is hardly democratic. The earmarks ordinarily do not have a sponsor so they cannot be traced back to a specific legislator, and they are introduced and voted upon without a public airing.”

--BerkshireEagle.com, January 31, 2006

http://www.berkshireeagle.com/editorials/ci_3460207

“Many Republicans have forgotten that as government grows, its increased power to grant favors or inflict pain attracts more people who would abuse the system.”

--John Fund, The Wall Street Journal, January 9, 2006

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110007785>

“But the problem is broader than Mr. Abramoff, Mr. DeLay or even the inherent potential for abuse in one-party rule of all three branches of government. It also has to do with the astounding growth of the lobbying industry, a growth that has tracked the growth of the federal government itself.”

--**Todd S. Purdum, The New York Times, January 8, 2006**
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/weekinreview/08purdum.html>

“As Congress considers ethics reforms amid a lobbying scandal, critics of the system argue that the rapid growth of earmarks has made it harder to reduce the federal budget deficit while providing a bonanza for lobbyists, who often prod lawmakers to secure projects for their clients.”

--**Bennett Roth, Houston Chronicle, February 3, 2006**
<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/nation/3632968.html>

“I am pleased that members of Congress are working on earmark reform, because the federal budget has too many special interest projects.”

--**President George W. Bush, January 31, 2006**
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/>

“Added Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas: ‘I don't know how you have any lobbying reform without earmark reform. One of the root causes of the problem (confronting Congress) is not how lobbyists spend their money, it's how we're spending the people's money.’”

--**Mary Curtius and Janet Hook, Los Angeles Times, January 31, 2006**
<http://www.contracostatimes.com/mld/cctimes/news/local/states/california/13753945.htm>

“Not surprisingly, a process so immune from public view has become a routine source of political patronage. Congressmen are tempted to steer earmarks toward the interests of firms ‘savvy’ enough to hire their former top staffers, whose salaries and bonuses are dependent on their success in garnering government dollars. Undue weight is frequently given to projects backed by campaign contributors. Meritorious projects all too often languish because they can't afford to hire a well-connected lobbying front to make their case.”

--**Rep. Artur Davis, Montgomery Advertiser, January 30, 2006**
<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060129/OPINION0101/601270372/1012/OPINION>

THE SOLUTION

“Votes should be required on objections to excessive earmarking in bills, and members should be required to declare that they have no personal interest in the earmarks they promote. Real debate and reasonable amendments must be allowed on most bills, and the integrity of conference committees needs to be reestablished.”

--**Norman Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann, The New York Times, January 19, 2006**
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/19/opinion/19ornstein.html?pagewanted=print>

“No real reform is possible until Congress addresses the irresponsible way it handles the federal purse strings, which licenses members to plunder the U.S. Treasury with near impunity.”

--**Jacksonville Daily News, January 23, 2006**
<http://www.jdnews.com/SiteProcessor.cfm?Template=/GlobalTemplates/Details.cfm&StoryID=38232&Section=Opinion>

“First, enact a general ban on all legislative ‘earmarks’ that specify exactly which recipient receives which pot of money. Second, if any pork somehow gets by the general ban, require extensive disclosure as to which lawmaker requested it, which paid lobbyists requested it, what the earmark's national purpose is and what constitutional provision allows Congress to provide it.”

--**The Mobile Register, February 1, 2006**
<http://www.al.com/opinion/mobileregister/index.ssf?/base/opinion/1138789353220460.xml&coll=3>

"If earmarks became vulnerable to challenges and their money forfeited, spenders would be reluctant to insert them in the first place. Thus Congress has an opportunity to not only go after earmarks, but change its spending dynamic as well. Perhaps this year, instead of an open season *for* earmarks, Congress could have an open season *on* them."

--J.T. Young, **Washington Times, February 1, 2006**

<http://www.washtimes.com/functions/print.php?StoryID=20060131-090459-1099r>

"No single member of Congress should be able to direct tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars in spending. This practice is corrupting -- and budget-busting."

--The **Roanoke Times, January 9, 2006**

<http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/wb/wb/xp-47640>

"Another [consequential reform] would be to cut out the pork 'earmarks' inserted in appropriations bills, sometimes as a thank-you to a campaign contributor, but far more often as a way of politicians ingratiating themselves to voters back home with projects paid for by taxpayers nationally."

--Jay Ambrose, **Scripps Howard News Service, January 31, 2006**

http://www.shns.com/shns/g_index2.cfm?action=detail&pk=AMBROSE-01-31-06

"Earmarks should be handled in the open. They should be transparent and debated by the entire House or Senate membership. Each earmark should be decided on its merits. Each earmark should be included in the text of a supporting bill that lawmakers vote on. The sponsor or sponsors should be included in each earmark."

--Waco **Tribune-Herald, February 7, 2006**

<http://www.wacotrib.com/opin/content/news/opinion/stories/2006/02/07/20060207waceditorial7.html>

"Whether either party is even modestly sincere in these born-again pledges to stop earmark abuse is an open question. If they are, they will make earmarking reform the centerpiece of any 'lobbying reform.'"

--The **Wall Street Journal, January 28, 2006**

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/weekend/hottopic/?id=110007887>

"Stricter rules, more illuminating disclosure and better enforcement could ameliorate some of the seamier aspects of the mutually beneficial, mutually degrading symbiosis that characterizes the lawmaker-lobbyist relationship."

--Ruth Marcus, **The Washington Post, January 9, 2006**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/08/AR2006010801162.html>

"Congressional earmarks -- the pork-barrel projects quietly inserted into legislation, like the \$200 million 'Bridge to Nowhere' in Alaska -- must be stopped."

--Rep. **Jill Long Thompson, South Bend Tribune, January 31, 2006**

<http://www.southbendtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060131/Opinion05/601310410/-1/OPINION/CAT=Opinion05>

"A good start would be to end all earmarks and limit service on the appropriations committees to six years."

--James T. Hackett, **Washington Times, February 1, 2006-02-01**

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20060131-090500-7403r.htm>

“Although there are a variety of lobbying reforms that Congress should consider, going after earmarks is key. They are the "prize" lobbyists are after, a prize that comes at the expense of the American taxpayer. That said, it also is perhaps the most difficult practice to end because many politicians perceive it to be the bread and butter that preserve their incumbency.”

--**Sen. John McCain and Sen. Jon Kyl, The Arizona Republic, January 29, 2006**
<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/viewpoints/articles/0129mccain-kyl29.html>

“Getting rid of earmarks will not be sufficient to fully reform a political class that has long since forgotten its oath to protect and defend a Constitution of limited government. But it would be a start.”

--**Las Vegas Review-Journal, January 30, 2006**
http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2006/Jan-30-Mon-2006/news/5567358.html