

*Follow up questions for the record Re: FFM Subcommittee Hearing*

*“Federal Funding of Museums”*

*May 17, 2006*

**Mr. Thomas Schatz, President of Citizens Against Government Waste**

1. You mentioned duplicated earmarks where a museum receives money for the same project every year. In your opinion how does this happen?

- Are the Appropriators buying votes and building constituencies?

**RESPONSE:** Earmarks and especially museum earmarks are an easy way to curry favor back home because they are a visible reminder of the fact that the government is “working.” Appropriators have the opportunity to add projects as they control the writing of legislation. They brag about the earmarks yet they never mention the deficit or debt.

- Do they just not remember they gave money to the same project last year, and the year before?

**RESPONSE:** CAGW thinks that they probably do remember because Members of Congress are very cognizant of any money going back to their state or district especially an earmark that they requested.

2. With earmarks, there is no competition to weed out the mediocre. What do taxpayers get in return for these earmarks?

**RESPONSE:** There is no vetting process to ensure that the money is being spent on national priorities. Funding the Smithsonian Institute versus a Teapot Museum is an excellent example. The Smithsonian is a stellar collection of scientific and anthropologic artifacts. The Teapot Museum in Sparta, North Carolina is a “niche” museum that has no national significance. In addition, Sparta is a rural community of about 1,110 people, and the museum project will create few jobs, making the “economic development” rationale for the earmark suspect. Local museums should be funded locally; if they cannot be sustained based upon attendance and local support, taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize their continued existence.

*Follow up questions for the record Re: FFM Subcommittee Hearing*

*“Federal Funding of Museums”*

*May 17, 2006*

3. In your earmark search for museums in the last several years, did you notice how many dozens of museums which were created by earmarks years ago receive an earmark every year?

- Why is that?
- Do they come to rely on that funding for general operating expenses?

**RESPONSE:** There are a number of museums that have received multiple earmarks over the years. For example, one of the most expensive projects is the Please Touch Me Museum in Philadelphia, which received \$5.2 million between 2001 and 2005. Another recurring project, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, consistently receives \$1 million a year. Whether or not these funds are designated for general operating expenses, the earmark makes it easier for the organization to finance its operations by reducing the need to rely on non-taxpayer funds.

While the requesters haven't admitted it, CAGW believes that once one earmark is given, future earmarks are based on that amount as a starting point for subsequent years. When funds are provided over a period of years, the earmarks for museums (and other projects) become a form of entitlement spending.

4. Do you see a conflict of interest when art advocates head up these projects, institutions and agencies?

**RESPONSE:** There is no reason to believe that the person who asks for the earmark and will benefit financially from the earmark can be objective in determining a funding level. Since taxpayers are paying that individual's salary or a portion thereof, individuals requesting earmarks should not have a financial or political stake in the level of funding for the earmark.