



Support the Earmark Moratorium

May 9, 2014

Dear Senator,

Taxpayers for Common Sense urges you to support efforts to renew the American public's faith in our elected officials by pledging your support for continuation of the earmark moratorium.

Earmarks both reflect and contribute to a broken budget process. Too often earmarks reward parochial interests at the expense of national needs. The earmarking process also routinely subverts established merit-based, competitive, or formula-driven budget processes without debate. Ultimately earmarks may fund some projects many people consider "good" projects, but the congressionally directed spending earmark process never guarantees these are the most beneficial and worthwhile projects for federal tax dollars. That feeds taxpayer cynicism and leaves needs unmet.

Any process for doling out congressionally directed spending earmarks will detract from necessary efforts to make our government work in the interests of all taxpayers rather than politically connected special interests. The federal budget currently consists of nearly \$3.7 trillion in annual spending. At their height in 2005, there were more than 15,000 earmarks directing nearly \$24 billion. Yet the pursuit of earmarks requires an inordinate amount of your and your staff's time, leaving the other 99% of the budget lacking necessary congressional oversight. Former House Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-WI) articulated this issue well: "The reason I hate earmarks is because they suck everybody in. They suck them into the idea that we have to be ATM machines for our districts, and so they focus on the tiny portion of most bills that are earmarks instead of focusing on the policy that is represented by the legislation that we produce."

While each member of Congress is aware of the needs of their own constituents, it is the job of Congress as a whole to balance the needs and interests of the hundreds of millions of constituents in all 435 districts or 50 states. Rather than use the shortcut of earmarking, Congress must do the hard work of openly creating transparent, merit-based policies to spend federal tax dollars on the nation's highest priorities. But your responsibility does not end when the checks are signed. Congress must pursue rigorous oversight over how funds are spent. That is the real power of the purse.

With a \$17.5 trillion debt and deficits predicted to rise to a trillion dollars in less than 10 years, Americans need sound fiscal policy, not a return to spending decisions being made on the basis of political muscle rather than project merit. Taxpayers deserve a funding system where every taxpayer can find the where, why, and for how long on how every dime is spent.

Again, we urge you to support the earmark moratorium by signing the bipartisan letter being distributed by Sens. Coburn (R-OK) and Udall (D-CO).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ryan Alexander". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke connecting the first and last parts.

Ryan Alexander
President