



June 16, 2010

Dear Representative,

The undersigned organizations urge you to cosponsor H.R. 5258, the Earmark Transparency Act introduced by Representatives Cassidy, Speier, Reichert and Adam Smith. This landmark piece of legislation would require Congress to create an online, searchable database for all earmark requests. By centralizing all earmark requests in a single database, the bill vastly improves the way in which information about earmarks is disclosed.

Currently, there are four major types of earmark disclosures (requests, committee reports, certification letters, conference reports) scattered over more than 550 websites. By directing the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives to post detailed earmark information in a single database on their respective websites, the Earmark Transparency Act would go far to round up diffuse information to create a meaningful public resource.

The Earmark Transparency Act improves upon measures taken last year by the leadership in the House that required lawmakers requesting earmarks to post their requests on their official websites. Because these requests were not disclosed in a standard method or location, they were difficult to track.

Under this legislation, the public will be able to search, sort, aggregate, and download all earmark data on the website and to determine through a single search the total number and dollar value of earmarks requested and secured by an individual Member of Congress. The public would also be able to learn whether a project receives earmarks year after year, and whether a project is supported solely by congressionally directed spending or whether it receives other sources of funding, such as state tax dollars or private grants. Additionally, the database will allow the public to identify whether earmark recipients are for-profit, non-profit or governmental bodies. The length of each project and the justification for the projects will also be included.

The Earmark Transparency Act will provide an increased level of accountability and public access to the earmark process, and we urge you to cosponsor this legislation.

The Sunlight Foundation

Open the Government.org

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

Public Citizen

Center for Democracy and Technology

OMB Watch

Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

US PIRG

Center for Responsive Politics

Project on Government Oversight

National Taxpayers Union

Americans for Tax Reform

Center for Fiscal Accountability

Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas

Special Libraries Association

Government Accountability Project

Essential Information

Liberty Coalition

Calaware

iSolon.org

Rutherford Institute

American Association of Law Libraries

Society of Professional Journalists

Society of American Archivists

Mark Tapscott, Editorial Page Editor, The Washington Examiner

National Freedom of Information Coalition

Alliance for Patient Safety.org

U.S. Bill of Rights Foundation