



March 11, 2020

Support the Earmark Elimination Act, H.R. 6211

On behalf of our activist community, I urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to support the Earmark Elimination Act, H.R. 6211. Introduced by Reps. Ralph Norman (R-S.C.) and Ted Budd (R-N.C.), this bill would make permanent the temporary moratorium on congressional earmarks put into effect in 2010 by creating a point of order against any provision within a bill that matches the definition of an earmark, and when raised would be stricken absent a two-thirds majority to override.

Earmarks, which have been accurately called the “currency of corruption,” are specific line items in a spending bill, such as an appropriations or transportation bill, for a project or program. Not only corruptive in nature, they are also, as then-Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) astutely put it, “the gateway drug to spending addiction.” After Republicans faced widespread backlash to their rampant use of earmarks through 2010, the House Republican Conference signed off on a ban of all earmarks. At their peak in the mid-2000s, total earmarks reached nearly 14,000 in a single year (2005), costing upwards of \$30 billion (2006).

Proponents of earmarks argue that these extra spending provisions funding often-useless projects “grease the wheels” for legislation by persuading individual members to come on board for the sake of earmarked spending for their districts and come at a small monetary price to taxpayers. They refuse to acknowledge the corruption and spending addiction that comes with earmarks, not to mention the public opposition to the pernicious practice.

Congress can improve their legislative processes in many ways that would increase individual Member buy-in to legislation without resorting to crude handouts that resemble nothing else so much as a bribe. Decreasing the centralization of power by allowing more debate, amendments, and a greater emphasis on process generally both in committee and on the floor would do far more to improve Congress’ performance than renewing earmarks ever could, and with a much friendlier price tag.

The House Rules Committee held hearings in January 2018 on the potential of bringing earmarks back into the congressional process by ending the 2010 moratorium. FreedomWorks submitted written testimony in opposition to ending the moratorium to the hearing and has signed onto

coalition letters in opposition as well. This bill represents the correct path forward on earmarks – banning them outright – certainly not bringing them back.

Earmarks are the antithesis of transparency and accountability, and must not be brought back into the congressional process. For these reasons, I urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to support the Earmark Elimination Act, H.R. 6211.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks