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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

February 9, 2007

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Dear Colleague:

As you are aware, the Appropriations Committee placed a moratorium on earmarks until a reformed process is put in place. While most congressional earmarks are worthwhile and provide critical funds for state, local, and community needs, the recent explosion in the number of earmarks set up a situation that was uncontrollable. While Congress should never cede all authority over funding decisions to the President or the staff of federal agencies, the earmarking process is clearly in need of reform.

To increase transparency in the process and restore public confidence, the House rightly acted to approve new rules. As you know, Rule XXI has been amended to require committees to include a list of congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, and limited tariff benefits contained in the measure, along with the names of the Members requesting each earmark provided. Additionally, the Code of Official Conduct (House Rule XXIII) has been amended to require a Member who requests a congressional earmark, limited tax benefit, or limited tariff benefit to provide a written statement of the committee of jurisdiction identifying the recipient and purpose of the earmark and certifying that neither the Member nor his or her spouse has any financial interest in the earmark.

The Appropriations Committee will implement new procedures to ensure compliance with the House Rules. It is our goal to create an accountable, above-board, transparent process for funding decisions, and protect the Congress as an institution from the abuses that have harmed its credibility:

1. The Committee will have a universal deadline of Friday, March 16 for all requests. This will ensure that Appropriations Committee and staff have adequate time to vet all requests.
2. Each Member office will need to enter their appropriations requests into the Committee's electronic database and provide the statement and certification now required by the Code

Dear Colleague

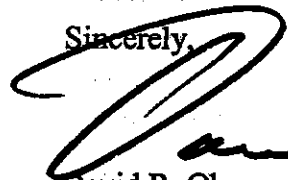
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of Official Conduct, on letterhead and signed by the requesting Member. The Committee will not consider any request from a Member if the certification is not provided. The Committee will retain the certifications and, as required by House rules, make those certifications available to the public in the case of any request receiving funding.

3. Perhaps most importantly, the Committee plans to reduce the dollar amount of earmarks in appropriations bills by 50 percent relative to the amounts planned in FY 2006. This reduction would not be applied to those accounts which by their nature are project-based, like the Corps of Engineers in which the President traditionally requests, and the Congress approves or amends the Administration's proposed project list. However, the process has gotten out of hand. Again, I believe it is Congress's prerogative to make spending decisions through the appropriations process, but the process needs to be reformed. By reducing the number of earmarks we can ensure that these projects are adequately vetted and evaluated.

Each of the subcommittee chairs will be sending out additional guidance on what they will require from Members about their requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Obey', written in a cursive style.

David R. Obey
Chairman