

September 14, 2006: Statement on Earmark Reform Bill

September 14, 2006

Statement on H.Res.1000

A Resolution to Reform the House Earmarking Process

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.Res.1000, to provide for earmark reform in the House of Representatives. This measure, I believe, will help bring much-needed transparency and accountability for funding projects in the House. It will do this by obliging Committees to list the names of House Members next to the projects that they request. Identifying project sponsors will allow the public to see how their representatives are choosing to spend their tax dollars.

I am pleased that this legislation will include ALL House Committees. That means this resolution will identify the sponsors of special tax breaks, and special programs, as well as those who are asking for appropriations earmarks.

Despite the fact that I support this bill, I am disappointed in its limitations. In the first place, the bill only applies to House rules. It's not the law of the land. So if there are violations, there are no legal consequences. Second, the bill does nothing to limit or at least define Member earmarks. That means that Members will continue to use their seniority and committee assignments to get special deals for their districts. While I'm a strong supporter of bringing tax dollars back to the district, I firmly believe that federal programs and projects need to be awarded based on merit and need, and should be subject to scrutiny and rigorous review.

Having said all this, H.Res.1000 is a step forward. I am hopeful that greater transparency for the earmarking will allow the public to become more knowledgeable about the process. At the very least, this will let them know how their taxes are being spent. And at the most, it will create the oversight and accountability we need to lead to better allocation of our precious and limited resources.