

COUNCIL FOR



December 14, 2017

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

AMERICANS  
*for* TAX REFORM

Dear Representative,



We understand that an attempt to restore earmarks may occur in the Republican Conference or be attached to legislation before the end of December. As we have in the past, we urge you to reject any proposal to change the definition of an earmark, which would violate the moratorium that has been in place since 2011.

Earmarks are corruptive and unfair. And for Republicans, they are political poison.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) and Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas) wrote in their February 9, 2017 Washington Examiner [op-ed](#): “The shortest route from new majority to defeated minority is to campaign as good-government reformers and then govern as beltway-insiders. ... we would be going the wrong way if Republicans were to lift the current ban on earmarks.”



The corruption associated with earmarks may not be apparent to the more than 60 percent of House Republicans who have been elected following the establishment of the earmark moratorium in 2011. They were not present when staff, lobbyists, and members of Congress were incarcerated in the mid-2000s, and Republicans lost their majority in the House in 2006, the year in which earmarks reached a record \$29 billion. When Republicans took back the House in 2010, they quickly established the moratorium, knowing there was no such thing as a “limitation” or “exception” for earmarks.



Some members may be lured by promises from earmark proponents that the process is “fair,” and projects in their districts will be duly considered and funded. Such comments are disproven by the grossly disproportionate distribution of earmarks. In the 111th Congress, when the names of members who requested earmarks were included in the appropriations bills, 61 percent of the earmarks and 51 percent of the money went to members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. In other words, 81 appropriators (50 in the House and 31 in the Senate), who constituted 15 percent of the entire Congress, purloined more than half of the earmarks.



Earmark proponents also argue that Article I gives Congress the power of the purse. That is true, but if members of Congress do not like how federal funds are being spent, they can change the authorizing statutes to distribute the money any way they wish. Earmarks are a lazy, unfair, and corrupt way to circumvent that process, and they have been roundly excoriated by the conservative movement upon which Republicans depend for their political lives.

As Republicans, you have a responsibility to your constituents to act in a fiscally responsible manner. Agreeing to amend or end the earmark moratorium and bring back bridges to nowhere, teapot museums, and indoor rainforests is a complete violation of those principles.

Sincerely,

Tom Schatz  
President, Council for Citizens Against  
Government Waste

Grover Norquist  
President, Americans for Tax Reform

James L. Martin  
Founder/Chairman, 60 Plus Association

Pete Sepp  
President, National Taxpayers Union

David McIntosh  
President, The Club for Growth

David Williams  
President, Taxpayers Protection  
Alliance

Jonathan Bydlak  
President, Coalition to Reduce  
Spending