



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 16, 2010

## Earmarks in Spending Bill Reveal Business-as-Usual

There is more to the overwhelming \$1.1 trillion spending bill than what initially meets the eye, including \$8 billion in earmarks. What's worse is that the spending bill and presence of earmarks reveals the hypocrisy of elected officials who adamantly decried pork barrel politics and overspending.



The [New York Times](#) explains the construction of the bill: Because the Senate did not pass the individual spending bills that would normally finance government agencies for a full year, the Appropriations Committee combined them into a single measure known as an omnibus spending bill.

In the House of Representatives, a spending bill known as the [continuing resolution](#) passed, which would maintain government spending at current levels through September 2011. It then moved to the Senate for a vote.

The Senate omnibus bill has been targeted as not only expensive, but for the presence of 6,700 earmarks totaling \$8 billion found in the bill.

According to [Fox News](#), All but eight Senate Republicans had agreed to a two year ban on earmarks. A majority Democrats did not, voting down a proposed ban just two weeks ago. The \$1.1 trillion Senate omnibus bill contains 6,714 earmarks worth \$8.3 billion.

*New York Times* notes that of those who voted in favor of the earmark ban, dozens requested nearly \$1 billion for pet projects in the spending bill.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell alone requested \$86.1 million for his state of Kentucky, which includes \$1 million to build a Kentucky Blood Bank Center, \$18 million for a railroad upgrade at Fort Knox, and \$1 million for waterfront development in Paducah.

Senator Bill Nelson of Florida, one of the few Democrats who voted in favor of the earmark ban, requested \$30 million in earmarks.

Likewise, Republican Senators John Cornyn and John Thune requested dozens of earmarks for their home states, while simultaneously criticizing the Democrats for what they called a pork-laden bill.

When questioned about the earmarks, Thune said that he supports the projects, but opposes the bill.

Furthermore, the omnibus bill was ultimately put together by Democratic Senator Dan Inouye of Hawaii and Republican Thad Cochran of Mississippi, both known for their pork projects.

Fox News writes, In 2010, Cochran won 240 earmarks worth \$490 million, while Inouye sponsored or co-sponsored 151 programs worth \$387 million.

In the omnibus bill, each Senator sponsored dozens of earmarks, totaling \$100 million. Cochran's



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earmarks include \$21 million for a Gulf Coast Test Center, \$5 million for Natural Products Center, \$4 million for Large Structure Building Center, and \$3.4 million for an Anti-Drug Center. Inouyes earmarks include \$21 million for Hawaiian Heath Care, \$6 million for wildlife refuge, \$3 million for Hawaii National Guard drug program, and \$5.5 million for Joint Venture Education Center.

Fox News editorial board notes, While lawmakers argue about the legitimacy of earmarks, in this case there is no doubt this bill lacks debate and careful consideration. All 6,000 earmarks got air dropped without a floor debate and members-let alone the public-barely had the chance to decide if any of these earmarks are a wise use of taxpayer money.

Leslie Paige, a spokeswoman for Citizens Against Government Waste, commented on the hypocrisy of lawmakers who speak out of both sides of their mouth about earmarks.

Its incredible. If you are against earmarks, you should have pulled your request. We are encouraging the Senate to vote against this bill. We hope to pressure them to do the right thing.

A spokesperson for Mitch McConnell claims that the senator will push for a temporary spending measure that would fund the government through February, rather than rushing through the 2,000 page bill.

Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri, who has taken a fierce stance against earmarks, contends that she will oppose the bill.

The earmarking process is arbitrary and flawed, and our nation simply cant afford this kind of spending right now, McCaskill said. Anyone who tells you they are opposed to earmarks and concerned about our national debt but still has earmarks in this bill cannot be taken seriously.

The astounding number of earmarks found in the expensive spending bill reveals the lawmakers failure to understand what the results of the midterm elections indicated-voters are fed up with Washington politics.

Even Tea Party elected officials are beginning to renege on their promises. Republican Kristi Noem, for example, was elected after campaigning against special interest groups. However, since her election, Noem hired her new chief of staff from a lobbying firm.

Likewise, the [Washington Post](#) reports, On Tuesday afternoon, [Noem] was the guest of honor at a Meet & Greet with Washington high-rollers at the powerhouse lobbying firm Barbour Griffiths Rogers.

According to the *Post*, Noem is one of 13 incoming Republicans who have hired lobbyists to run their offices.

Even the tax compromise reflects the Republicans failure to maintain their [Pledge to America](#). The Tea Party Patriots point out that the tax deal breaks five provisions of the Pledge, including one which states lawmakers will act immediately to reduce spending and another that indicates lawmakers will advance legislative issues one at a time.

Though Tea Party activists rallied lawmakers to reject the tax cut legislation, it passed in the Senate 83 to 15.

The *Post* writes, It was probably inevitable that the Tea Party activists would be betrayed, but the speed with which congressional Republicans have reverted to business-as-usual has been impressive.

The unfortunate reality made clear by the tax deal and the omnibus spending bill is that the more things change, the more they stay the same.



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