

Welcome to Russ Reid's eighth biweekly e-newsletter,

Mark on Earmarks!

By: Mark McIntyre

"Wasteful spending!"

"Pork-barrel politics!"

"Pet projects for lawmakers!"

You've probably heard some version of these criticisms of earmarks. As I've noted before, attacking earmarks makes for a good-to-great sound bite. Cherry picking individual earmarks which, at least on the surface, may not seem like good investments, is popular among politicians and the media.

(By the way, remember the infamous \$233 million "Bridge to Nowhere"? What the media failed to report is that, under the federal highway funding formula, the State of Alaska was owed most of that money anyway. Two weeks ago, I had a visitor from Alaska who described why the bridge needs to be built -- yesterday. Huh, who knew? Obviously, just another big, wasteful pork project.)

For those of us in the business of securing federal dollars for worthy nonprofit organizations and institutions, these criticisms are galling. We represent clients that feed people... house people... educate people... cure people... and create jobs. The vast majority of earmarks fund projects that accomplish these goals.

For example, earmarks have been used to launch or fund:

- The Children's National Medical Center, which treats more than 300,000 children each year and is a world leader in neonatal and pediatric care.
- A residential care program that helps transform former juvenile offenders by teaching them accountability, critical thinking, conflict resolution, leadership, and other necessary life-skills.
- An emergency food and shelter program, which has served more than 35 million meals and provided 1.3 million nights of lodging to the homeless.
- A hospital in Arkansas, to purchase digital mammography equipment, which provides faster, more effective diagnoses of breast cancer.
- The highly respected Iraq Study Group, which produced 77 recommendations on how to end U.S. involvement in Iraq.
- A community college system in Texas to help prepare students for science and engineering jobs.
- The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, which has provided nutritional assistance to more than 150 million women, infants and children since its inception.
- A railroad underpass for a village in Illinois. This infrastructure project has improved economic development, and alleviated traffic (and pollution) at what was once the fourth most-congested intersection in the entire state.

“Wasteful spending!”

“Pork barrel politics!”

“Pet projects for lawmakers!”

Really?

Next e-newsletter (August 10): How to protect – or add – earmarks after sub-committee markups.

If you have a question about the appropriations process that you would like me to address in a future newsletter, or if you would like to learn more about how Russ Reid can help your organization secure significant federal funding through the appropriations process, please contact me via phone or e-mail at 202-912-8622 or mark.mcintyre@russreid.com.

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