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## **TAXPAYERS FOR COMMON SENSE RELEASES NEW EARMARK DATABASE**

*Despite reform, new database finds that Congress hasn't lost its appetite for pork*

Washington, D.C. – Congress has cut earmarks by 23 percent from the record 2005 levels, according to a new groundbreaking analysis and database of congressional earmarks released today by Taxpayers for Common Sense, a national budget watchdog organization. The database can be accessed at [www.taxpayer.net](http://www.taxpayer.net).

“Now with the click of a button, taxpayers can learn how many earmarks were secured by their elected representatives,” said Ms. Ryan Alexander, President of Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS).

Over the last nine months, TCS staff and interns spent thousands of hours creating a comprehensive database of all earmarks in the final spending bills and, for the first time, have connected almost every earmark with a political sponsor. Congress inserted 12,881 earmarks worth \$18.3 billion into this year's spending bills--, \$14.8 billion of which were disclosed by lawmakers.

“Earmarks are down, but not out. Promises to cut earmarks in half fell short with too many lawmakers continuing to feather their own nest,” continued Alexander.

Here are the main findings:

**-Appropriations Committee Dominates:** Appropriators continue to dominate the annual hunt for earmarks. Nine of the top 10 earmark recipients in the Senate and eight of the top 10 in the House were from the appropriations committee. Senate appropriators averaged more than \$273.3 million each, more than 50 percent higher than their Senate counterparts. House appropriators averaged \$58.9 million, about 2.5 times the average for a House lawmaker. Mississippi led in both chambers with Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), the senior republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, pulling in more than \$837 million.

**-Homeland Security Earmarks Skyrocket:** The 110th Congress uses the Homeland Security budget as a sponge for earmarks. The FY08 Homeland Security spending bill had 144 earmarks worth \$639.5 million. “Funding transportation security, terrorism preparedness and disaster response shouldn't be decided on the basis of who has the most political power or electoral need,” continued Alexander.

**-Airdropped Earmarks Continue:** Rules to restrict “airdropped” earmarks—those projects first appearing in the final legislation, were instituted at the beginning of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. While this cut the number, it certainly didn’t eliminate the practice. TCS found 392 “airdropped” earmarks worth nearly \$1 billion in the FY08 spending bills.

The 110<sup>th</sup> Congress ushered in new rules requiring lawmakers to disclose their earmarks. These rules created the data that made this analysis and database feasible. The information around earmarks, however, remains clouded. The report concludes by offering a series of recommendations and proactive solutions on how to make Congressional spending decisions more transparent to the American taxpayer.

“This year for the first time, Congress has allowed taxpayers to take a peek behind the spending curtain. However, earmarks must be further reduced to much more manageable levels or we will never have true transparency and accountability over how lawmakers are spending our money,” concluded Alexander.

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