



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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BYRD REACTS TO BUSH EARMARK RHETORIC

Washington, DC – Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, issued the following statement in response to President Bush’s comments on earmarks:

“Instead of focusing on a weakening economy, growing debt, a bearish stock market, and the fact that millions of American home mortgages are now in the hands of foreign creditors, President Bush is reportedly taking time in his State of the Union Address to demagogue on the very arcane issue of earmarks.

“President Bush today said that earmarks have tripled in number over the last decade, but he forgot to tell the public that he signed those earmarks into law. President Bush also neglected to mention that the tripling in earmarks occurred under a Republican Congress.

“The Constitution grants to the Congress the power over the purse. The operation of the government – to enforce our laws, to serve our people, to protect our liberties – depends upon the Congress providing the funds necessary to do so.

“Congress, elected by the people of the individual states and Congressional Districts is in a much better position to know if there are specific needs for federal assistance in their states than unelected bureaucrats in Washington.

“When the Democrats came to power in 2007, we added unprecedented transparency and accountability to the earmark process. As a result, the public now knows who is responsible for an earmark, what it is for and how much it will cost. Members must also certify that they have no personal financial interest in their earmarks. Members of Congress are accountable to their constituents for the choices they make. What the President won’t tell the viewers tonight is that he is not subjecting his own earmarks to cuts. With the reforms that the Democrats have put into place, Congressional earmarks now receive far more public scrutiny than the President’s.”

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