



March 12, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Norman  
United States House of Representatives  
319 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ted Budd  
United States House of Representatives  
118 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Norman and Budd:

On behalf of National Taxpayers Union (NTU), the nation's oldest taxpayer advocacy organization, I write to express our support for your legislation, H.R. 6211, the "Earmark Elimination Act." This important legislation would make permanent a ban on earmarks by prohibiting the consideration of legislation containing any earmarks and creating a point of order against those provisions. The earmark moratorium of 2011 was a significant win for taxpayers that should be sustained, not squandered.

The House debate over reversing the earmark moratorium makes it clear that a permanent statutory solution is the best way to curb legislators from acting on their worst instincts. Earmark supporters have argued that reforms can fully insulate earmarks from the corruption and wasteful spending that had become hallmarks of the practice. But the inherently parochial nature of earmarks makes these risks impossible to avoid and puts them fundamentally at odds with the enumerated powers that require Congress to act on behalf of the general welfare of Americans.

The Era of Earmarks was distinguished by an irresponsible attitude toward budgeting from which we are still attempting to fully recover. Trading favors through federal funding puts pressure on members of Congress to spend more to get their own pet projects approved instead of doing the tough legislative work that requires compromise, open debate, and principle. To that end, earmarks are a prime example of fiscal irresponsibility. In fact, Citizens Against Government Waste has identified more than 100,000 earmarks totaling \$360 billion since 1991 - a significant total that displays Washington's addiction to wasteful spending.

The regular legislative process, through budgets, authorizations and appropriations, is the best way to increase accountability, oversight, and Congressional input when it comes to spending taxpayer dollars. The appropriations request process, though in need of reform and transparency, is far preferable to earmarking because it provides opportunity for Members to make recommendations that then require both Committee and chamber consideration.

NTU is pleased to endorse the "Earmark Elimination Act." We encourage all Representatives to support this legislation and work towards its swift enactment.

Sincerely,

Thomas Aiello  
Policy and Government Affairs Associate