



February 17, 2009

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States House of Representatives
240 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Flake:

On behalf of the 362,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I write in support of H. Res. 85, your package to close a loophole in House earmark accountability rules. By strengthening disclosure requirements, your resolution would combat the back-scratching culture that costs taxpayers millions of dollars each year through wasteful earmarks.

While the 110th Congress did make improvements to earmark disclosure, there are still loopholes which can be exploited. Current rules require that a Member submitting an earmark request must certify that he or she has no “financial interest” in the earmark. This is intended to prevent Members from earmarking for their own personal benefit, such as granting federal money to companies in which they are shareholders. However, the House Ethics Manual specifically states that campaign contributions do not constitute a financial interest.

Time and again, we’ve heard of Members receiving piles of campaign cash from the companies and entities that they helped with earmarks. This endless spiral of earmarking for cronies, who then fill Members’ campaign war chests, is not what Americans had in mind when they cried out for earmark reform. H. Res. 85 would clarify existing strictures to ensure that campaign contributions are indeed considered a “financial interest.”

In this economic recession, American taxpayers are especially overburdened. More than ever, they cannot afford for their hard-earned money to enter the earmark vacuum. **NTU supports H. Res. 85 and any roll call votes on the resolution will be significantly weighted in our annual Rating of Congress.**

Sincerely,

Andrew Moylan
Government Affairs Manager