



Thomas A. Schatz
President

January 29, 2008

The Honorable Don Young
2111 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Young,

I am in receipt of the letter you sent on January 23, regarding your name being placed on our list of nominees for Citizens Against Government Waste's (CAGW) Porker of the Year award. We are well aware of the pride you take in your pork, to the extent that you referred to the taxpayers' dollars as "my money" on the floor of the House of Representatives on July 18, 2007. That misguided use of the possessive alone epitomizes why Americans are fed up with earmarks and why opinion polls show Congress inspiring an even lower level of trust among Americans than President Bush.

In fact, it was the "Bridge to Nowhere" that you added to SAFTEA-LU in 2005 that became the poster child for out-of-control spending and led to the loss of credibility (and possibly the mid-term elections) for Republicans. Regarding the Coconut Road project and the Bridge to Nowhere, neither our January 22 press release nor any prior CAGW publications state they were funded in 2007, as you allege in your letter.

In regard to the number and cost of earmarks that you requested for fiscal 2008, we agree that you are correct that you had 18 earmarks worth \$10.3 million. The difference arises from a \$7.16 million earmark in the Agriculture section of the omnibus appropriations bill that said "Akaka, Boyd, Fortuno, Hirono, Inouye, and Young." The lack of specific information on which "Young" was responsible led to our miscalculation. In other words, we did our best given the lack of complete transparency in the bill.

We appreciate the passion you display in defending your pork, but dispute your conclusion. You said that "earmarks save lives." In reality, earmarks hollow out national security by taking valuable defense dollars and placing them into programs and projects that are not viewed as essential by military experts at the Pentagon.

As Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) pointed out in a December 17, 2007 *National Review Online* opinion piece, "Congress ... should be focused on funding the priorities of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines and their commanders — not the priorities of lobbyists, campaign donors, and special interests." He added that projects should be "subjected to competition," and "Congress should be forced to play by the rules they set for others, particularly when funding the wrong priorities costs American lives."

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Some members of Congress argue that there are “good earmarks” and “bad earmarks” in addition to claiming that they know better than bureaucrats what is good for their state or district. Yet Congress established the statutory process for review and consideration of programs and projects, and it should be adhered to. If the argument that “Congress knows best” is paramount, then why not have Congress, in all its wisdom, earmark all federal discretionary spending and abolish federal agencies altogether?

In regard to the impact of earmarks on agency programs, I would like to bring to your attention a September 7, 2007 report on fiscal year 2006 earmarks from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Inspector General (IG), report number AV-2007-066. The IG found that 1,615 of the 7,724 earmarks reviewed were neither reviewed by the agencies nor based on merit. A total of 6,109 of those 7,724 earmarks “bypassed the states’ normal planning processes.” The report said that earmarks “reduce funding for the states’ core transportation programs,” and “disrupt the agency’s ability to fund programs as designated when authorized funding amounts are exceeded by over-earmarking.”

Considering the specific earmarks mentioned in your letter, funding programs at a Salvation Army Center in one state or district opens the door for other members of Congress to finance similar projects. The organization had revenue of \$3.324 billion and expenditures of \$2.996 billion for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, according to its 2007 annual report. There are 8,500 Salvation Army centers nationwide. If every member of Congress obtained an earmark for all 8,500 centers in the same amount of \$500,000, which you added in conference, it would cost taxpayers \$4.25 billion.

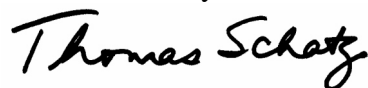
The Alaska Permanent Fund had \$38.9 billion in assets as of June 30, 2007 and paid \$1,654 to every eligible Alaskan in 2007. You once said that you don’t particularly like having that kind of cash sitting in “a coffee can.” Claims that Alaska is needier than other states and deserves more earmarks ring hollow in the face of such untapped wealth.

Indeed, Governor Palin understands that Alaska should fend for itself. In her State of the State Address on January 15, she said, “We can and must continue to develop our economy, because we cannot and must not rely so heavily on federal government earmarks. ... We can do this – we’re 50 years old now, and it’s time!”

While earmarks are only a fraction of federal spending, they distort the normal budget process and encourage corrupt behavior. Former Representatives “Duke” Cunningham and Bob Ney are both incarcerated as a result of their earmarking activities. It is surprising to us that while you are living under the cloud of a criminal investigation related to past earmarks, you are drawing even more attention to your earmarking efforts.

We will be glad to share the results of our online poll for Porker of the Year.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Thomas Schatz in black ink.