
COOPER TO FOREGO EARMARKS IN FYâ€™09 BUDGET

Calls for Congress to reform spending practices immediately

WASHINGTON-U.S. Congressman Jim Cooper (D-TN) today took the next step in his call for Congress to reform its wasteful spending habits, announcing that he will not submit " earmark " funding requests for fiscal year 2009. In foregoing earmarks, Cooper said he would support a Congress-wide moratorium this year as well as a bipartisan review of directed spending, such as one proposed yesterday by Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI).

"With America facing record deficits, a serious economic slowdown and a long-term budget crisis, now is the time for Congress to lead by example," said Cooper, a senior member of the House Budget Committee. "For a dozen years, no one minded the store in Washington, and pork-barrel spending got out of control. We in the 110th Congress should be the ones who put a stop to that. Let's place a moratorium on earmarks until Congress can decide the most equitable and efficient way to fund projects that benefit the American people."

By 2005, earmarks had risen to consume \$23.5 billion of federal spending, according to the nonpartisan group Taxpayers for Common Sense. In 2007, after taking control of Congress, Democrats introduced new transparency requirements and aimed to reduce the number of earmarks inserted in spending bills. However, money directed for special projects still takes up \$18.3 billion of federal spending in 2008.

Cooper has long called for an end to the earmark process (see attached op-ed), earning past praise from good government groups for his 100 percent voting record on "Flake amendments" to strip wasteful spending projects. According to media reports, he becomes the fourth House Democrat to call for a one-year moratorium on earmarks. In the Senate, the three leading presidential candidates of both parties have joined the call for a moratorium.

"This is a great opportunity to do what's right and put a stop to ATM politics," said Cooper. "I believe Americans are way ahead of their elected leaders on some pretty basic wisdom: don't spend money you don't have, and what you do have, spend wisely. Congress should live up to such a reasonable standard."