

# The Union Daily Times

## NEWS

### Inglis: Lake another 'bridge to nowhere'

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With its \$187 million price tag is Patriot's Lake another "bridge to nowhere" that serves only a few or a vital necessity that costs no more than a single military aircraft?

The lake, which would be formed by damming Tyger River and Fairforest Creek, was a major part of Fourth District Rep. Bob Inglis' speech to the Union Rotary Club Tuesday afternoon. He compared the lake to the proposed Gravina Island Bridge in Alaska which was labeled the "bridge to nowhere" by opponents. The project, which was canceled in 2007, would have linked Gravina Island (population 50) with the town of Ketchikan (population 8,900) at a cost of \$320 million.

The bridge has become a symbol to many of pork barrel spending and cast an unflattering light on congressional earmarks. Inglis said in the current climate a project like Patriot's Lake that benefits so few would be a hard sell in Congress.

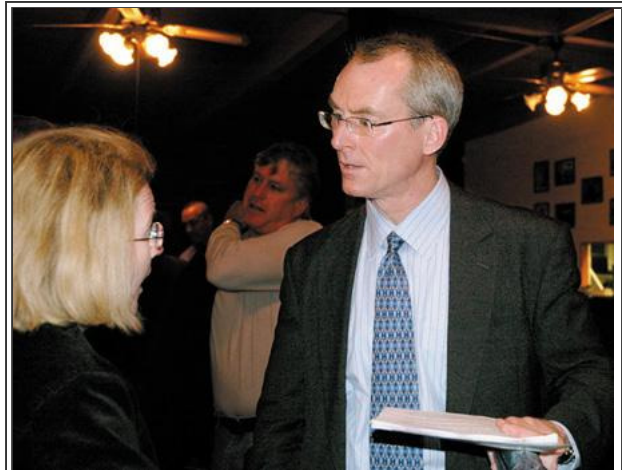
"In this environment with such negative attention on earmarks it's hard to see how a \$187 million earmark is seen with much favor," he said. "It's very difficult to sell to Congress on a \$187 million earmark that benefits one particular district."

A concept study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found that the while Patriot's Lake was technically feasible it was not economically justified. Inglis cited the study, pointing out that the bridge to nowhere was not economically justified either. He added that when the cost of treating the water to make it drinkable is factored in, the cost of the project could conceivably exceed that of the bridge to nowhere.

"South Carolina DNR says that at \$187 million it would be one of the most expensive public works projects ever envisioned in South Carolina," he said. "That's a rough analysis; it could be more if you considered the treatment costs for making it a drinking water source.

"The bridge to nowhere became the country's most famous earmark at \$223 million," he said. "If you include the water treatment costs Patriot's Lake would likely exceed that number and cost-benefit analysis in the Corps of Engineers study indicates that it is not an economically feasible project. The bridge to nowhere was not economically feasible given the small number of people served on the island in Alaska."

Rotary Club President Buddy Smith was one of several members who disagreed with Inglis' position and expressed support for Patriot's Lake. Smith pointed out that the lake would actually cost no more than a single aircraft flown by the U.S. military.



Melinda Wilburn/Sight&Sound Rotary speaker Fourth District Rep. Bob Inglis listens to a Rotary Club member after his speech Tuesday.

"I was talking to one of our conservative business people here and practically to a man, everybody said we need to move forward," he said. "When we said \$187 million is a lot of money, that businessman said 'Hey, it's only one airplane.' We have given so much money to our military and national defense that the infrastructure of this country is going lacking."

Inglis, however, pointed out that "a U.S. military aircraft protects all 320 million Americans but a lake in Union County like the bridge to Alaska is designed for one community. The federal government's first responsibility is national defense and our military protects all of us."

A single B-2 stealth bomber costs \$2.1 billion.

In 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimated it would take \$1.5 trillion over five years to make needed repairs and improvement to the U.S. infrastructure or roughly half the current federal budget. Infrastructure includes roads and bridges, levees and dams, transit systems, water and sewer treatment facilities, power grid, rail lines and ports.

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