

## Statement by Rep. Henry A. Waxman on Appropriation Earmarks

After careful consideration I have decided that I will not request funding through the earmark process in the FY 2009 appropriations cycle.

We have a problem in Congress. Congressional spending through earmarks is out of control. When I was first elected to Congress in the 1970s, it wasn't unusual for an appropriations bill to be either completely free of earmarks or have just a few dozen special projects. That slowly changed, and by 1995 there were nearly 3,000 earmarks in that year's appropriations bills.

By 2005 the number of earmarks—and the billions of dollars devoted to them—had skyrocketed. The Congressional Research Service counted more than 15,800 earmarks in the 13 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2005 at a cost of over \$27 billion. At the same time funding for some of our nation's most basic needs was being shortchanged.

Real progress was made last year by Chairman David Obey and the Appropriations Committee to restore reason to this process. Earmarks were cut by 30% and their cost was reduced by over 60% compared to 2005 levels. But we still have too many questionable projects being funded and the sheer volume of earmark requests imposes an impossible burden on the Appropriations Committee.

Congress needs to find a better balance in this area. Properly targeted earmarks can provide the resources for essential services and needs in all parts of our country. They can also identify the most pressing priorities and bring assistance to those who need it most. But none of us can have confidence that a majority of earmarks are meeting these goals under the current system.

I think our best approach would be to suspend all earmarks for the 2009 appropriations cycle while we consider the right reforms for the earmark process. As a result, I will not submit any requests to the Appropriations Committee for this fiscal year. I look forward, however, to working with Chairman Obey, Speaker Pelosi, and all my colleagues on improving the earmark process.