

# Earmarks are key for our area's health

**Ruston Daily Leader**  
**Rick Hohlt, Publisher**  
**01-30-2008**

There's no better way to say it than U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, said it in Tuesday's edition of the Ruston Daily Leader.

"I hate that the public is being led to believe that if we totally do away with earmarks, all of a sudden, the United States is going to save a lot of money."

We hate it, too.

Last year, Alexander said, Congress spent no more than was given to them in the executive

budget.

Local agencies and projects benefited heavily from earmarks in the latest round of appropriations bills. The state saw \$142 billion, more than \$3 million went to Louisiana Tech, Grambling State University, Grambling, Lincoln Parish and the Union-Lincoln Water Supply.

These are not another "Bridge to Nowhere."

They are vital, we repeat, vital agencies, be they higher education, government or otherwise, that are absolutely some of the most important places money could be spent in our area to stimulate economic

growth and provide further stability. And we all know that with murmurings about the economy on the increase, a little reassurance will go a long way.

President Bush called for a crack-down on "pork barrel" practices in Congress, saying he'll veto bills that do not cut in half the number and cost of pet projects wedged into federal spending bills.

The executive branch of the U.S. government may not even be able to find Lincoln Parish on a map. In our eyes, it's Alexander's job to make sure the parish gets a piece of the very, very large pie of tax dol-

lars that we submit to the government every year to run our beautiful country.

Alexander has fought for some well-deserving causes.

We credit him with the foresight to help the Northeast Louisiana Family Literacy Consortium stay alive by marking vital federal dollars for the group, which has hobbled recently because of money problems.

We've said it before, and we'll continue to say it until we're shown unequivocal proof that our needs would be addressed without them: Earmarks are key for our area.