

Alexander presents check to ULM for small business incubator

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U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, presented a \$450,000 check to the University of Louisiana at Monroe tonight and proudly admitted that earmarks made the funding possible.

Earmarks also helped build the new Intermodal Transit Facility which opened in November, according to Alexander.

Several congressional leaders have made it their mission to rid Washington

of earmark abuses by sponsoring the "Pork-Barrel Reduction Act" in recent years.

But Alexander said politicking had gotten in the way of realizing the common good that appropriate pork-barrel spending can provide.

"Take the word pork, and spell it p-o-r-c, and it becomes an acronym for project of regional concern," said Alexander.

ULM President James Cofer echoed those sentiments during his brief remarks before he and representatives of the ULM College of Business Administration accepted the check.

"One man's pork is another man's tenderloin," he said.

The \$450,000 will fund a small business incubator that will assist entrepreneurs with vital training such as how to prepare a business plan and budget for expenses.

Small business incubators have mushroomed in the last two decades and become a significant segment of America's small-business economy, according to the National Business Incubation Association, a trade organization in Athens, Ohio.

"The center will make a difference by providing training ... so critical to the success of our region," said CBA Dean

Ron Berry.

Representatives from the offices of Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., and Sen. David Vitter, R-La., were also present Thursday night.

The check presentation was followed by a reception honoring three small business owners in the area: Paul Meeks of Tallulah, Taji Helaire and his brother, Chioce Helaire of Natchitoches, and Yasuko Makishi of Shreveport.

In addition to recognizing the achievements of the small business owners, the reception celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Louisiana Small Business Development Center.