



Office of Representative Walt Minnick
Idaho's First Congressional District
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For immediate release

Minnick: I will not seek earmarks in 2010, beyond

Washington, D.C. – Idaho Congressman Walt Minnick has decided to make permanent a pledge he made in 2009, refusing participation in the Congressional earmark appropriations process.

“The unambiguous lesson of November 2008 and of last week’s election is that the American people want Congress to spend less money, and want us to approach major issues in an independent way. One significant step I can take to show I am serious about heeding those lessons is to refuse earmarks,” Minnick said. “The American people want to change the way Washington does business. We want a bipartisan approach that begins in the middle. We want more elected officials with the courage put constituents and fiscal responsibility before politics. And we want the battles and bickering to end, so that all of us can get down to the business of renewing and restoring America.”

Minnick is one of three Democrats and 37 Republicans who refuse earmarks. However, during his first year in office Minnick has been able to serve his constituents and bring home much-needed federal funding for Idaho’s First Congressional district. Whether it was helping the Payette Fire Department with a construction grant, assisting a Meridian business with a federal loan for manufacturing shot guns, championing a funding request from a rural education program or a recent announcement of \$14 million for Idaho forests, Minnick has gotten the job done without seeking earmarks.

According to the [Citizens Against Government Waste](#), there were 10,160 earmarks worth \$19.6 billion in the 2009 appropriations bills. Minnick said in 2009 that he would refuse to participate in the earmark process due to the need for fiscal restraint in Washington, D.C, and says now that the ballooning federal deficit and difficult economy require even more fiscal discipline by Congress.

“We need to permanently change the earmark process and show the American people that we are committed to spending their money in a way that serves the best interests of the country,” Minnick said. “But that is only one step toward putting our country back on the track to fiscal health. We need a Constitutional amendment requiring Congress to balance the budget. We need a commission process that will force politicians to make the tough choices to fix the grave financial problems in entitlement programs. And we need to impose mandatory ‘pay as you go’ rules to make sure that Congress spends not one penny that’s borrowed from our children and grandchildren.”

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INFO:

What are earmarks?

- *OMB defines "earmarks" as "funds provided by the Congress for projects, programs, or grants where the purported congressional direction (whether in statutory text, report language, or other communication) circumvents otherwise applicable merit-based or competitive allocation processes, or specifies the location or recipient, or otherwise curtails the ability of the executive branch to manage its statutory and constitutional responsibilities pertaining to the funds allocation process." [Office of Management and Budget](#)*
- *But the fact is that on occasion, earmarks have been used as a vehicle for waste, and fraud, and abuse. Projects have been inserted at the 11th hour, without review, and sometimes without merit, in order to satisfy the political or personal agendas of a given legislator, rather than the public interest. There are times where earmarks may be good on their own, but in the context of a tight budget might not be our highest priority. So these practices hit their peak in the middle of this decade, when the number of earmarks had ballooned to more than 16,000, and played a part in a series of corruption cases. [Remarks by President Barack Obama](#)*

Who refuses them?

[Click here](#) to see a list of members of Congress who refuse to participate in the earmark program.

Is there another way?

- *First, I pledge to work directly with those who will put Idahoans back to work with focused projects to help local communities, by assisting them with applying for competitive, open grants through a process subject to public scrutiny.*
- *Second, I pledge to continue seeking earmark reforms while voting against spending I do not believe is in the best interests - short term or long term - of Idaho or America.*
- *And third, I pledge to listen, learn and evaluate my decision over the coming year while fighting in every way I can to get this economy moving again so we can restore fiscal discipline and balance the budget.*

[Office of Congressman Walt Minnick, April 2009](#)

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