

**Earmark Transparency Act of 2010**  
**Executive Summary**  
**Sponsored by Senators Feingold, Gillibrand, McCain, & Coburn**

Though much progress has been made in bringing sunlight to the earmarking process, in his 2010 State of the Union Address, President Obama challenged Congress to go even further. Specifically, he called on Congress to create a single searchable database of all congressional earmark requests, to be made available online for the public.

The Earmark Transparency Act of 2010, is a bipartisan bill that answers the President's call for Congress, by requiring the creation of a searchable database of all congressional earmark requests.

Over the years, many raised concerns about the problems and the role of earmarks in the federal budget. Americans deserve to know what earmarks their members of Congress are requesting. They should know if special interests have played a role in the spending process. Americans are tired of Washington using hard-earned taxpayer funding on wasteful projects, and they want to lift the shroud of secrecy over how spending decisions are made.

Without a doubt, there have been significant strides in bringing the system of earmarking under control and into the sunlight. Earmark requests are better disclosed than they used to be and, most approved earmarks are now written into legislation. The number and total cost of approved projects is lower than it was a few years ago. Yet, in FY 2010, Congress approved more 9,000 earmarks costing taxpayers at least \$16 billion.

The Earmark Transparency Act of 2010 answers the challenge made by President Obama during the State of the Union earlier this year. In the address, the President called on Congress to go even further.

“I'm also calling on Congress to continue down the path of earmark reform. Democrats and Republicans. You've trimmed some of this spending, you've embraced some meaningful change. But restoring the public trust demands more. For example, some members of Congress post some earmark requests online. Tonight, I'm calling on Congress to publish all earmark requests on a single Web site before there's a vote, so that the American people can see how their money is being spent.”

To restore trust, the public demands that we do more. This proposal is straightforward. It creates a one-stop shop database where citizens can go to view every lawmaker's earmark requests, as well as those projects ultimately approved and signed into law.

The Earmark Transparency Act of 2010 would do the following:

**Create a user-friendly, online database** – it would allow citizens to sort, search and download earmark data;

**Provide details on projects that are not currently available** – it would include all relevant information, including the amount of initial request, amount approved by the committee, amount approved in final legislation, sponsor name, sponsor state or district, project name, and other relevant information;

**Allow the public to see what Congress sees** – The bill would require the website to include the earmark request letter written by a member of Congress and any documents supporting the request that is sent to a congressional committee; and

**Make information available quicker** – it would, consistent with the President's speech, require all requested earmarks that are approved to be made public before a vote.

While some of this information exists on various websites of a few elected officials, this effort would put all the information in one central location. With a simple click of a button, any citizen would be able to learn everything they want to know about how elected officials are spending their money.

The simple principle underlying this legislation is that we need more sunlight to shine on our great system. The brighter the sunlight, the more our great democracy will flourish.