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LETTER FROM THE CONGRESSMAN

Dear Friends,

This week Congress began debating its annual appropriations spending bills. The House spent four days discussing the Homeland Security spending bill because Democrats refused to bring transparency and accountability to the process whereby funds are earmarked for special projects. President Bush has threatened to veto the spending bills which exceed fiscally responsible levels.

This next week, the Senate is scheduled to continue discussing the Ted Kennedy immigration plan. As this proceeds, I will give it my continued attention and work for a comprehensive solution that does not give away amnesty.

As always, I thank all of you in the 31st District for the opportunity to serve you in Congress and look forward to the work that lies ahead in the coming days.

Until next week,



THE NEED FOR SUNLIGHT IN THE EARMARK PROCESS

When I first ran for Congress, I pledged to fight for our Central Texas values in Washington. I came to Congress to fight out of control government spending and to stamp out waste, fraud and abuse. This week I led a group of my Republican colleagues in challenging Democrats and their plans to spend taxpayer money in secret slush funds tucked into our Appropriations bills. Their efforts to concentrate power in the hands of a few, without accountability, transparency, or recourse, is a disturbing departure from our representative form of government.

Reforming the earmark process was a cornerstone of the Democrats' campaign promises in last fall's elections. But then again, words and actions don't always match up with this Democratic Majority. Despite their pledge for openness and transparency, Democrats made it even harder to identify earmarked spending in legislation and impossible to have it removed. Earmark reforms made to shine sunlight on the process last year by the Republican Congress were rolled-back by the Democrat Majority now in control of Congress.

Last year, Republicans made great strides to reform earmarks by increasing transparency and accountability. Hallmark reforms to House rules made it possible for all House members, for the first time ever, to challenge individual taxpayer-funded earmarks on

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the House floor. Each Member of Congress was forced to place their name next to their earmarks. In addition, Republicans changed House rules to allow legislators the ability to force a debate and vote on any earmark coming to the floor for consideration.

That important reform was eviscerated by the new Democratic majority who wasted no time changing House rules last January. The new changes make it impossible for members to challenge individual earmarks on the house floor as long as the underlying bill lists the earmarks it contains. In fact, even if this list is inaccurate and a member's earmark is not listed, it still cannot be challenged.

Democrats also chose to hide from reality by allowing spending bills to be certified as "earmark free" despite the fact that they may contain hundreds of millions of dollars in earmarks. The only requirement to be "earmark free" is for Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-WI) to declare it so.

After all these rule changes, the new Democratic leadership decided to keep earmarks out of spending bills until after the bills passed the House. Members of Congress would be forced to vote for undesignated pots of money—Democrat slush funds—without knowing how the money would be spent. All earmarked spending and pet projects would be added by the Appropriations Committee Chairman and air-dropped into legislation once the House and Senate meet to negotiate differences in their spending plans. Members of Congress would have no ability to debate or remove wasteful spending.

Deciding these abuses could not be tolerated, I worked with other members of the Republican leadership to organize a fight. For 19 hours Tuesday and Wednesday, I remained on the House floor as one after another Republican Congressman joined me to speak out against secret earmarks and Democrat slush funds. Ultimately, the Democrat Majority was forced to back down and accept Republican reforms—a huge victory for American taxpayers. The Associated Press reported on June 14th that, "Republicans skillfully exploited a political opening provided by the Democrats, whose position ran counter to campaign promises and reforms passed both this year and last."

The Politico newspaper reported on June 13th that, "Democratic leaders gave in to Republican demands that lawmakers be allowed to challenge individual member-requested projects from the final version of each appropriations bill."

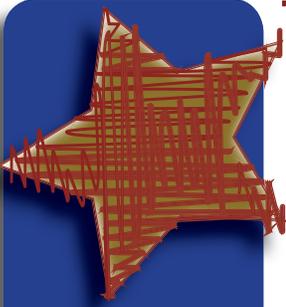
As the House continues to debate spending bills, I will continue to speak out against out of control spending. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of your money—unfortunately, this Congress is failing miserably. Rest assured that I will continue to stand up for our Central Texas values and will use my position on the Appropriations Committee and in the Republican Leadership to fight for you.

FUNDING FOR EAST WILLIAMSON COUNTY PARK

I was proud to recently announce the City of Taylor will receive a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant from the National Park Service to assist in the purchase of 23.7 acres of land for East Williamson County Park. The project includes the development of picnic areas, a pavilion, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, a hiking and biking trail, wetlands expansions and a xeriscape garden. The \$400,000 Federal grant will provide half the funding for the \$800,000 project.

I am glad to see Taylor receiving this funding. This project will allow the people of Taylor and surrounding communities to further enjoy East Williamson County Park with their friends, families and neighbors.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.



LEGISLATION TO PREVENT ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION BILLS TO PROTECT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

I recently proposed three bills that call for greater protections for social security numbers in order to deter illegal immigration. The Social Security Card Fortification Act, the Social Security Number Non-Proliferation Act and the Social Security Protection Act will help prevent illegal immigrants from using fraudulent citizenship documentation to gain employment in the United States.

It is shocking that our most personal and private means of identification, our social security numbers, are only proven by a two by three inch piece of paper. These bills do far more than protect each person's nine identifying digits, however; they are another line of defense against illegal immigrants being able to take refuge in the United States. With the protection against forgery and theft these bills would offer, they ensure that people who present social security cards as a means of identification are indeed legal residents of our country. These bills will provide a meaningful step toward true immigration reform.

FIGHTING BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS TO CONSTRUCTING BORDER FENCE

Today I offered an Amendment to the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act that would expedite the building of a fence along the United States' southern border. My amendment would remove bureaucratic and environmental obstacles and funding restrictions to the construction of a fence or tactical infrastructure.

Illegal immigrants are entering our country in increasing numbers because our border is not secure. We need to get this fence built to change that. The American people want this fence built. There is no reason for this holdup; Congress authorized this fence last year, and it's not getting done. This Amendment would ensure that we don't have to jump through hoops and can build this fence now.

The Appropriations bill includes three provisions that appear to be good oversight, but in reality are bureaucratic roadblocks that effectively kill construction of fencing and border infrastructure. My amendment would eliminate these bureaucratic roadblocks designed to thwart fence construction, but still require good government sunshine and oversight of the process while taking much-needed steps to secure the border while protecting local and environmental values.

Unfortunately the Amendment failed on a party-line vote, with most of the Democratic majority voting against building the fence now.

PROTECTING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

I recently released the following statement regarding the House's vote on S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2007:

"I am committed to funding research for life-threatening diseases such as Parkinson's disease, cancer, and diabetes - but not at the expense of human life. I voted in strong opposition to this bill because it ignores the most recent science and uses tax dollars to fund the intentional destruction of human life. Embryonic stem cell research is a process that extracts cells from living human embryos, and in doing so, extinguishes a living being. As a committed member of the Pro-Life Caucus, I will continue to defend the sanctity of human life at all stages.

"Scientists have just announced they have made advances that will allow them to produce embryonic stem cells without destroying a human embryo. It is important for Congress to take a look at such breakthrough technologies and other possible alternatives to embryonic stem cell research that would allow us to find cures for serious diseases that don't compromise our ethics."