

this year, in 2008, not waiting until 2028. Congress should not spin an energy fantasy, but should deal with things that we can do today to deal with today's energy realities, and I urge my colleagues to look at the options like those in my legislation.

EARMARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. I will speak for a minute and then refer to a few charts.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw attention to earmarks contained in the Homeland Security appropriations bill. We may not even have any appropriations bills on the floor this year. What may happen is that we will simply do a continuing resolution in September and then sometime in January do a big omnibus bill, and all of the earmarks, the thousands and thousands and thousands of earmarks that have been put into the bills through the appropriations process that have never been to the floor, will simply be approved with one vote. So it behooves us to do what we can to actually highlight what some of these earmarks are. Now, we know some of the earmarks that are in the Homeland Security bill, and we hope that it comes to the floor. It likely will not, so we'll talk about one of them here.

Mr. Speaker, there is in the Homeland Security bill something called the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program. Now, this has not traditionally been earmarked in the Homeland Security bill. It only started last year. Last year and this year, we have earmarked some \$75 million total for this account. Now, in this account, some \$500,000 was earmarked for Westchester and Rockland Counties in New York for pre-disaster mitigation earmarks. This comes on the heels of the same counties getting about \$1 million last year.

Now, New York State has its share of disasters. I think there were 21 Presidential disaster declarations over the past 10 years, but there were just as many in other States, other States that had to go through the regular process whereby grants were awarded on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of: Do we have an appropriator? Do we have a high-level Member of leadership who can get us an earmark for some of these programs?

For example, in parts of Oklahoma, they had 20 disaster areas declared in the last 10 years. Yet Oklahoma hasn't received a dime in earmark funding in this bill. They must not have an appropriator here.

We often endlessly hear that Members of Congress know their districts better than some faceless bureaucrat; that's why they've got to earmark, but let me ask: Does a member of the Appropriations Committee or a Member of leadership know his district better than a rank and file Member? Because the former are getting most of the earmarks at the expense of the latter.

Let me refer to this chart. On this chart, in the last 2 years, for pre-disaster mitigation earmarks in the Homeland Security bill, rank and file Members have gotten about 37 percent of the earmarks. Here, appropriators and other highly ranked Members have gotten 63 percent. Of the \$75 million total, 63 percent of the earmarks are received by just 27 percent of the Members in this body.

Now, again, do those 27 percent know their districts better than others? I would suggest not. It's just that they're in a position to get these earmarks. So all of this hifalutin language about, you know, "we know our districts" means just this: "I'm in a position to get money for my district at the expense of others whether or not there's a Federal nexus, whether or not there's a real need."

Let me just point out that, in terms of Westchester and Rockland Counties, out of all of the thousands of counties in the country, only 11 were wealthier than Westchester County in New York. Does Westchester County really need \$500,000 in pre-disaster mitigation earmarks at the expense of some poor county somewhere else in the country? This earmarking, as we all know, has gotten completely, completely out of control.

Let me just go to a couple of other charts. One of the other often used justifications for earmarks is that we as the legislative branch have the power of the purse. Article I gives us the power of the purse. That is certainly true. That is often taken as justification for doing the earmarking that we currently do, for the contemporary practice of earmarking. Well, at my request, I asked CRS to actually look and see what the Appropriations Committee has been doing over the past several years as the practice of earmarking has really grown.

As you can see, from the 104th Congress to the 109th Congress, this is the line here. This is earmarking. We've gone from about 1,500 earmarks up to nearly 10,000 just on this chart, but when you look at the number of witnesses called before the Appropriations Committee for a hearing to actually look at what we're spending, that line goes down. That line is in the blue.

So what we're seeing is that, as earmarking has grown, real oversight has declined any way you look at it. If you want to look at numbers of witnesses, some people will say, well, you can't tell everything from that. I concede that.

So let's look at the number of days of hearings. Here in the blue, from the 104th Congress to the 109th, we've had a decline in the number of days of hearings, yet a huge increase in earmarking.

Keep in mind that another justification for earmarking is people will say, well, that only represents about 2 percent of the Federal budget. We ought to really worry about the rest of the budget, not just earmarking. Well,

that's true. We should worry about the rest of the budget, but because of earmarking, we simply aren't.

Now, I would suggest the reason that there are fewer days of hearings and that the reason the number of witnesses has declined and that also the number of survey and investigation staff reports has declined as earmarks have grown is we simply don't have the time or the resources or the inclination, frankly, on the Appropriations Committee to actually do real oversight.

So, for getting just a couple percentage points of all of the Federal spending designated to earmarks, we really give up the power of the purse that we have. That's why we've seen other spending, all discretionary spending, grow by leaps and bounds as we've had earmarking go up; we simply don't look at the rest of the spending.

We all know that the party that is now in the majority has made a lot of hay over the past couple of years that, in this Congress, there was a culture of corruption. If that were the case, certainly earmarks were the currency of corruption. That continues. It simply opens up too many opportunities when Members of Congress can without real oversight write checks to people from home, either to campaign contributors or to constituent groups or to anybody. Unless we really come on the floor and do real oversight, this is going to happen. When you have a process like it looks like we're going to have this year where we don't even have appropriations bills on the floor where we can challenge these earmarks, these earmarks go unchallenged.

That, Mr. Speaker, I think, is certainly unacceptable. This body deserves better. We have a great and storied institution here, and we have a time-honored process of authorization, appropriation and oversight. We have skirted that for the past several years. Those in power now might point out, from the 104th Congress to the 109th, that was all under Republican rule. That is true. But the trend has not changed since we've had the new majority.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR) at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

As the 110th Congress, we approach You as the source of all enlightenment for our endeavors, Father of Light. We look to You for the very best gift, the perfect gift to discern the present and prepare for the future.

Facing the concerns of the Nation, we look to You to guide, protect and elevate Your people. You do not take away our problems nor the conflicts of resolve. Instead, by our dealing with them, You draw from us a greater good and a lasting peace.

Because You have made us and in Your revealed love brought us to true freedom, we need not act as in the past, nor according to the dictates of others, or our own compulsions. As a free people, we can act anew and be creative enough to do what is proper for our times.

In America we can say: You are "God with us" now and forever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ALTMIRE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ALTMIRE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

DISPENSING WITH CALL OF PRIVATE CALENDAR ON TODAY

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the call of the Private Calendar be dispensed with today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE TRUTH

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. This afternoon I will move to refer an Article of Impeachment to the Judiciary Committee.

People ask me, don't we have more important things to do? Think about this. This war has cost us our constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties. Is there something more important?

The Iraq war will eventually cost between two and \$3 trillion, meaning every American family will pay up-

wards of \$30,000 for this war. The war has contributed substantially to higher gas prices. Is there something more important?

Over 4,100 of our troops have died, and as many as 1 million innocent Iraqis have perished. Is there something more important?

There was never any proof that Iraq constituted an imminent threat to our national security, or that Iraq had the capability or intention of attacking the United States. Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 or al Qaeda's role in 9/11. Yet Congress was led to believe otherwise.

The Bible says, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Congress must know the truth in order for our Nation to remain free. In a free Nation nothing is more important than the truth.

GOOD WAR—BAD WAR

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, successful counterterrorism programs teach that to win, you must attack both terrorists and their money. Through Congress' partisan lens, Iraq is the bad war, while Afghanistan is the good war. Our partisan lens will not recognize good news from Iraq or bad news from Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban is back, funded by billions from heroin. The U.N. reports that in 2008, Afghanistan is now also the top producer of hashish. Money from heroin and now hashish total hundreds of millions, if not billions.

In sum, the Taliban's drug profits now may equal the operations budget of General McKiernan and his NATO Army.

The hot issue today is a possible surge of troops to Afghanistan. I will sound a note of caution that without aerial spraying and other counterdrug programs that worked in Colombia, such an Afghan move will only accelerate violence between two very well-funded opponents.

To turn the rising Taliban tide, we must attack both heroin and hashish in the narco-state that is Afghanistan.

OFFSHORE DRILLING AND GAS PRICES

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President announced that he is lifting the executive order that prevents Big Oil from drilling off of the treasured coastline of America.

What will this do to lower gas prices any time soon? Nothing. And nothing is exactly what the administration has been doing for the past 7 years as gas prices have nearly tripled.

By contrast, Democrats in Congress have been working on bringing down prices at the pump. We passed the first fuel efficiency standards in 32 years, and are supporting the movement to alternative fuels.

We want to help families now by releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and forcing big oil companies to start drilling on the 311 acres that are open for development now, or the 68 million acres that are under lease now for development.

Mr. Speaker, if domestic drilling can bring relief to American families, what are the big oil companies waiting for? Drill on those 311 acres and those 68 million acres under lease.

NATIONAL PAPERS FAVOR OBAMA

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the New York Times and the Washington Post are two influential national newspapers. Their articles are reprinted in hundreds of other publications, and television newscasts often repeat their stories.

I was curious how the Times and the Post were treating the two major party presidential candidates, so I looked at their front page coverage. The results may be of interest to voters who expect fair and objective reporting.

From June 28 through July 14, the papers wrote far more stories about Senator OBAMA than Senator MCCAIN. And while most of the 15 articles about Senator OBAMA were positive, not a single one of the nine articles about Senator MCCAIN was positive. That is a huge slant in favor of Senator OBAMA.

Surely voters deserve balanced coverage of the presidential candidates. And surely the media has a responsibility to provide it.

BRING DOWN PRICES AT THE PUMP TODAY

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, Americans everywhere are fed up with paying high gas prices. For 8 days, Americans have been asking President Bush to release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a move that has brought down prices at the pump in the past. But the President continues to say no.

In 1990, when the President's father withdrew oil from the reserve, the impact on prices was immediate, and they dropped 33 percent in 2 days. In 2000, President Clinton did the same, and prices fell before oil even hit the market. And in 2005, when this President Bush made the move, the price of oil dropped again.

Now the White House claims it won't lower prices but history proves that action to release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve provides immediate relief to American consumers.