



Congressman Jim McDermott



7th Congressional District ★ Washington

The Truth About Earmarks

We hear a great deal in the press about “earmarks” in the Federal budget process, and much of what is reported is unfavorable. But earmarking is not all bad – let’s look at how it works here in the 7th Congressional District.

An Earmark Primer

Every year, people who represent local governments, non-profit organizations, businesses, and educational institutions approach my office seeking federal funding for various programs and projects. We receive more than 100 requests every year; typically, about 10% receive funding because of competition from every congressional district for available federal dollars.

Fiscal 2007-2008 McDermott Earmarks

- \$352,500:** *WA Sheriff’s Office Gang Intervention Initiative*
- \$305,500:** *WA Court Technology*
- \$590,000:** *Elliott Bay Seawall*
- \$369,000:** *Lake Washington Ship Canal improvements*
- \$1,279,000:** *Puget Sound Nearshore Marine Habitat Restoration*
- \$1,626,000:** *Duwamish and Green River Basin Restoration*
- \$2,952,000:** *Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters Restoration*
- \$3,800,000:** *Landfill Gas-Clean Fuel Project*
- \$600,000:** *High Point Neighborhood House*
- \$500,000:** *Rainier Vista Boys and Girls Club*
- \$300,000:** *El Centro de la Raza*
- \$500,000:** *Asian Counseling and Referral Service*
- \$300,000:** *King County’s hybrid bus program*
- \$600,000:** *Vashon Island passenger-only ferry*
- \$1,462,000:** *Seattle Cancer Care Alliance’s proton therapy program*
- \$243,000:** *One World Now! to expand after school programs*
- \$282,000:** *NW Kidney Center’s medical surge capacity project*
- \$1,812,000:** *Mt. Rainier National Park improvements*
- \$20,000,000:** *Olympic National Park improvements*
- \$500,000:** *Seattle Public Utilities South Park Drainage Project*

We submit formal requests to the appropriations subcommittees, and certify that I have no financial interest in any requested project. Eventually, appropriations bills containing “earmark” projects are passed by Congress, and signed into law by the President. Finally, the federal agencies that disperse the funds recertify earmarked projects before releasing money.

The Bottom Line

The independent and non-partisan Taxpayers for Common Sense annually reports on earmarks obtained by Members of Congress. The most recent report places me in the top third (#138), responsible for earmarks last year of \$30,333,000.00. Members often team up to support an earmark, and that is my policy when I believe the money is going for something worthwhile.

To be sure, the earmarking process, although valuable, has shortcomings. It is worth noting that since Democrats regained the majority in Congress, the dollar amount of earmarks has been reduced by half, and legislation was passed to make the process more transparent. We’ll do even more, by publishing earmark information on the congressional web site.

Beginning in May, the IRS will distribute rebate checks to qualifying individuals and families. If you have questions, check out: www.irs.gov

FORT LAWTON

Justice No Longer Denied

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "A threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Those powerful words inspired me to help to right a terrible injustice that occurred in our community.

In his recent book, *On American Soil*, Seattle journalist Jack Hamann describes a shameful racial injustice at Fort Lawton during World War II: Late one night in 1944, a riot broke out at the Fort involving Italian POWs and African American soldiers. The next morning, one of the POWs was found hanged. The military charged 42 African American soldiers and staged the largest court martial in American military history. Only two lawyers were appointed to defend the soldiers, and the defense was denied access to crucial information. In the end, innocent soldiers were found guilty, some sentenced to prison, and all but one dishonorably discharged. Their lives were ruined, and most suffered in silence.

After reading Mr. Hamann's book, I introduced legislation to begin righting this terrible wrong. Working with a Republican House leader, Rep. Duncan Hunter, I persuaded the military to establish a special redress process.

The families of several deceased soldiers filed appeals, as did Samuel Snow, one of the two soldiers still alive.

A few months ago, we learned that Mr. Snow was found innocent and others soon would be. I was honored to join the family of deceased soldier Booker Townsell at a Reburial with Honor service in Milwaukee.

This work is not finished. The military, operating under rules ill-suited to this situation, reimbursed Samuel Snow \$725 for the back pay withheld from him. I've introduced legislation directing the military to apply a new, fair compensation formula. Senator Nelson has introduced a companion bill in the Senate.



Rep. McDermott pays respects to the family of Booker Townsell following a Reburial with Honor Ceremony.

HONORS & AWARDS

- ★ Knighted by the Kingdom of Lesotho in South Africa
- ★ Ceremonial Native American headdress presented by Seattle Urban Indian Health
- ★ Congressional Advocate of the Year, Child Welfare League of America
- ★ Children's Champion Award presented by The National Child Support Enforcement Association
- ★ Clean Energy Champion Award presented by the American Public Power Association, which includes Seattle City Light

Independent Ratings on Congressional Performance

100% by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

100% by the American Association of University Women

95% by the League of Conservation Voters

34 (top 10%) in Power Rankings by Knowlegis.

Rep. McDermott is . . .

- ◆ Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans
- ◆ Co-chair of the Congressional Kidney Caucus
- ◆ Co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on International HIV/AIDS, and
- ◆ A member of several other congressional caucuses that help to focus attention on particular issues and needs.

HOUSE LEADERSHIP ROLE

In the 110th Congress, I became Chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support. Its jurisdiction includes: national programs to help abused and neglected children and vulnerable families, unemployment insurance, child support enforcement, support for the disabled, supplemental security income, employment services, block grants for social services, and child care and development resources.

Hearings over several months addressed key unmet needs in America today, and I introduced legislation to begin to address them. HR 2233 reforms and modernizes the Unemployment Insurance program to serve the

21st century workforce; vast numbers of people do not qualify for unemployment benefits under today's outmoded system. This legislation passed the House with a strong, bipartisan vote.

The Invest in Kids Act (HR 5466) that I introduced is the first comprehensive reform of the child welfare program in nearly 30 years.

After hearings revealed that the federal government is not doing enough to compel payment of child support obligations, I introduced HR 1386 to strengthen child support registration and enforcement.

In a poignant moment before my subcommittee, pop recording star Jewel told her personal story of homelessness. This hearing led to passage of

a Congressional Resolution declaring November "Homeless Youth Awareness Month", an effort to raise the visibility of the millions of vulnerable American kids living on the streets today.

I also introduced legislation to reform the tax code to address employee misclassification. The IRS estimates that some employers misclassify 3.4 million employees as independent contractors, resulting in billions in lost revenue. Studies suggest some employers deliberately misclassify workers to cut costs. When this happens, workers unfairly lose access to workplace protections and benefits, while businesses that play by the rules are disadvantaged.

Iraq War

We are all aware of U.S. military casualties in the Iraq war, and though many in the 7th Congressional District share my fierce opposition to the war, we are steadfast in support of our soldiers.

This war is producing devastating, life-changing injuries. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury are among the injuries striking our troops in record numbers. These invisible wounds are every bit as debilitating and life-threatening as any more apparent injury. I strongly encourage all returning soldiers to seek medical attention if you are struggling with these very real medical conditions. Your well-being and that of your families should be our highest priority as you resume your life here at home, and it is our ongoing responsibility to be certain that you receive promptly the care you need.



SALMON

The Salmon Economic Analysis and Planning Act (HR 1507), which I introduced with Rep. Tom Petri, calls for the independent Government Accountability Office and the National Academy of Sciences to study the options available to restore wild salmon runs in a fiscally responsible way. Facts, not fear, or false claims, should guide Congress in making decisions that will save salmon from extinction.

Energy

We must combat global warming and end our addiction to oil. I introduced legislation to end taxpayer subsidies oil companies are receiving, even as they report record profits. In addition, I authored HR 1821 to provide financing to public power utilities for renewable energy production, and HR 1385 to promote energy efficiency in homes and buildings. These initiatives remain the centerpiece of the comprehensive energy package adopted by the House of Representatives.

Economy

We're all concerned about growing economic uncertainty and there are specific things we should be doing, now, to help those struggling. I've introduced legislation to extend unemployment benefits, and I helped to craft legislation to ease the mortgage crisis. In my view, the simultaneous tax cuts and war spend-

ing embraced by the current Administration have left the country in precarious straits and even more vulnerable to the shockwaves of the global economy.

Health Care

One of the gravest domestic casualties of the Iraq War is the lack of money to meet so many urgent social needs, especially universal health care coverage. The cost of health care is breaking the financial back of American families, and it is time to cover every citizen with a package of basic health benefits. I have introduced H.R. 1200 to create an American universal health care plan, and Congress should use the rest of this year to prepare comprehensive health care legislation to present to a new Administration early next year. Although the Congress repeatedly has enacted health care services for low-income children (CHIP), the President has vetoed the legislation, leaving even this most vulnerable population at risk.

Legislative Record

The Library of Congress operates Thomas, which is an excellent source of information about all legislation. Access it at: <http://www.thomas.gov/>.

Additional priorities I am addressing in legislation include:

- ❖ HR 3680—extension of the State sales tax deduction to benefit taxpayers in Washington and 10 states
- ❖ HR 2202—to establish national wage insurance
- ❖ HR 2607—to tax internet gambling and use the money to fund social safety net programs
- ❖ HR 3905—to provide development assistance and trade preferences to Least Developed Countries
- ❖ HR 949 —to extend federal recognition to the Duwamish Tribe

Tax Equity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act

Under current law, an employer's contribution to the premium cost of health insurance for an employee's spouse is excluded from the employee's taxable income. However, an employer's contribution for a domestic partner's coverage is considered a fringe benefit and counted as taxable income. I introduced H.R. 935 to remove this glaring inequity that denies gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and domestic partnership

relationships the same tax treatment of their workplace health care benefits accorded others with employer-provided health insurance.

Urban Indian Health Program

Another year brings another effort by the current Administration to close Indian health clinics across the country, including Seattle. We are working again to save this essential and cost effective program that serves the Native American community.



LET'S TALK!

Join me at an upcoming community meeting.

Thursday, May 29th ▲ 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Loyal Heights Community Center
2101 NW 77th St., Seattle

Saturday, May 31st ▲ 2:00 – 3:30 pm

West Seattle Public Library
2306 42nd Ave SW, Seattle
(not sponsored by the Seattle Public Library)

Sunday, June 1st ▲ 2:00 – 3:30 pm

2100 Building
2100 24th Ave. S, Seattle

For further information, please telephone my Seattle District Office (206) 553-7170, or visit my website at www.house.gov/mcdermott. Accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities. To arrange sign language interpretation for these meetings, please contact my District Office

Need Help Navigating the Federal Bureaucracy?

My office prides itself on providing excellent constituent services. We can help on a variety of issues and problems including passports, veterans and active duty military personnel, seniors, immigration, and housing. If you are a constituent of the 7th Congressional District, call the office at 206-553-7170. We're here to serve you.

In late January, Rep. McDermott led a Congressional Delegation and members from a dozen NATO countries on a tour of key Northwest military and civilian aviation facilities, including McChord Air Force Base, Fort Lewis, and Boeing.

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