



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 21, 2008

The Honorable Daniel P. Beard
Chief Administrative Officer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6860

Dear Mr. Beard:

On Tuesday, February 12, 2008 I launched a new website, www.earmarkreform.house.gov, to serve as a clearinghouse for information on efforts to win bipartisan support in the House for a total moratorium on all taxpayer-funded earmarks. Since then, www.earmarkreform.house.gov has welcomed thousands of visitors and been mentioned prominently in many media and blog articles on efforts to change the earmark process and end wasteful pork-barrel spending in Congress.

On August 18, 2007, I was pleased to receive a letter from your office informing me that my office had been approved for use of the domain name www.earmarkreform.house.gov along with a second name I had requested for a separate, unrelated project. ("These domain names are ready for your use and we are standing by to initiate them," stated the letter, a copy of which is attached.) I was surprised, then, to receive an e-mail message from your office on February 21, 2008 – nearly two weeks after the successful public debut of the new website – stating that www.earmarkreform.house.gov must be shut down and moved to a different location with a different domain name.

I am writing today to register my protest over this belated change, and to request a detailed explanation of the events that led your office to make this dramatic reversal. Changing its address now will inevitably hamper the effectiveness of the new website, much to the convenience of the majority that runs the House. Two recent developments in particular raise questions about the timing of HIR's reversal:

- HIR's reversal comes just days after an independent report revealed that the freshman Democratic class in the House has been "showered in pork" by the leaders of the current majority. According to The Hill, "[House] Democratic leaders have sent tens of millions of dollars to freshman lawmakers' districts in hope of protecting the party's newfound majority come November." ("Dem leaders shower pork on freshmen," February 14, 2008). "Based on figures compiled by the watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense. . . House freshmen accounted for \$263 million in personal, single-sponsor earmarks. Democratic freshmen accounted for \$237 million of that," a CongressDaily report added the same day.

- HIR's reversal comes just weeks after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) – who as leader of the Democrat-controlled House has the power to shut down the earmark process in our chamber immediately – declined to join me and more than 150 other House members in supporting a total moratorium on all earmarks.

The leaders of both parties in the House have discussed the need for greater transparency and “sunshine” in Congress, particularly with respect to the process by which our institution spends taxpayers’ hard-earned money. By serving as a public clearinghouse for real-time information on legislative efforts to reform the earmark practice in Congress, www.earmarkreform.house.gov contributes to this goal and helps to increase accountability in the use of taxpayer funds. Transferring the website to a different address now -- nearly two weeks after its successful launch -- will inevitably cause confusion for visitors and discourage some from continuing to utilize the website as a regular resource.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your consideration of these points. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "JH", written over the typed name and title.

John Boehner
House Republican Leader