March 10, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Leahy and Chairwoman DeLauro:

Recent news reports have suggested that you both plan to announce the return of earmarks in the coming weeks under the term “member-directed spending.” We are writing to strongly oppose resurrecting what is widely considered one of the most wasteful and corrupt practices in Congressional history.

As you know, the 2000s were marred by infamous earmarks like the Alaskan “Bridge to Nowhere,” an indoor rainforest in Iowa, a Teapot Museum, and absurd research projects like one analyzing goth culture. The wide-spread practice of earmarks was corrupting. Earmarks were used to buy and sell votes and reward favors. Earmarks brought discredit on the House and Senate and ultimately led to several Members of Congress being convicted on corruption charges. In order to restore public trust in Congress, the practice of earmarking was officially put on a moratorium in 2011 under Republican leadership.

Nothing epitomizes what is wrong with Washington more than pork-barrel spending in the form of congressional earmarks. According to the taxpayer watchdog group Citizens Against Government Waste, Congress has doled out more than 111,000 earmarks worth more than $375 billion since 1991.

Earmarks also help enable Washington’s spending addiction. They have been used as a quasi-legalized form of bribery to entice members of Congress to approve large spending packages that increase our deficit and explode the national debt. In an era of trillion-dollar deficits and a $27 trillion debt, it is hard to imagine how we will ever be able to restore any form of financial responsibility if big spenders in the halls of Congress are able to use earmarks to keep spending money we don’t have.

We cannot imagine a worse way to build back trust in Congress than to resurrect a system that has been roundly rejected as corruptive and wasteful for decades. After four years of a president who promised to “drain the swamp,” Democrats seem intent on filling it up with pork-barrel spending in the form of earmarks. Bringing back earmarks would be a grave mistake for Congress and future generations of taxpayers.
Sincerely,

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

Joni Ernst
United States Senator

Rick Scott
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Mike S. Lee
United States Senator

Ted Budd
Member of Congress

Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress

Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

Chip Roy
Member of Congress

Jim Banks
Member of Congress

Scott Perry
Member of Congress
Pat Toomey  
United States Senator

Ron Johnson  
United States Senator

Mike Braun  
United States Senator

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator

Yvette Herrell  
Member of Congress

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.D.  
Member of Congress

Dan Bishop  
Member of Congress

Mary E. Miller  
Member of Congress

Marjorie Greene  
Member of Congress

Bob Good  
Member of Congress

W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress
Mo Brooks
Member of Congress

Ralph Norman
Member of Congress

Matthew Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress

Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress

Jody Hice
Member of Congress

Jim Jordan
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock
Member of Congress

Mark Green, M.D.
Member of Congress

Lance Gooden
Member of Congress

Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress

Warren Davidson
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress