



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 13, 2008

**Washington Is Broken, and Republicans Will Fix It –
Even If Democrats Won't**

Dear House Republican Colleague:

Recent developments in American politics have shattered the bonds of trust between the American people and their elected leaders. Nowhere is this breach more evident than in the relationship between the American people and their Congress. By margins unseen in our country since the height of the House Bank scandal nearly 16 years ago, Americans disapprove of the Congress and lack confidence in our collective ability to address the challenges we face as a nation. They believe Washington is broken. And they're right.

The House is about to leave town for a two-week break while our nation's top priorities continue to go unaddressed. Democratic leaders won't allow a vote on a bipartisan Senate FISA bill needed to protect America. They won't allow a vote on bipartisan legislation to secure America's borders. They won't allow a vote on legislation supporting our troops in harm's way. But they will leave town peddling the myth that Washington has been fixed and Congress has been reformed.

Americans won't buy it. Nor should they. What good are congressional rules, if the majority that runs Congress doesn't live by them?

The 110th Congress has been a hollow promise, devoid of real reform. Never has this sad truth been more apparent than this week, when Democratic leaders broke their own ethics rules to engineer passage of a so-called "ethics" measure. The slow downward spiral of hypocrisy that began last year, when the leaders of the current majority began ignoring their own highly-touted earmark reform rules, has finally hit rock-bottom. I want to thank you for standing up for our institution – and the American people – this week in the face of the demagogic attacks that accompanied debate on this deeply-flawed plan.

House Republicans emerged from our annual retreat in White Sulphur Springs, WV, back in January by "throwing down the gauntlet of reform," as our colleague, Mike Pence, eloquently put it. We defied expectations, rejected the past, and called for a moratorium on all taxpayer-funded earmarks, challenging Speaker Pelosi and the House Democratic Majority to join us.

There are rumors Speaker Pelosi – under fire, and embarrassed by revelations that Democratic leaders have showered their newly-elected members in pork – may finally accept our challenge. If true, House Republicans – along with Sen. John McCain, and fellow reformers in the Senate – will have secured an important and impressive victory for the American people.

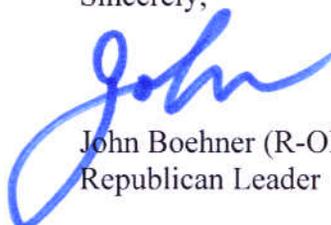
But as of this writing, the earmark factory in the Democrat-controlled Congress remains open. (“Democrats have already reformed the earmark process,” Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel this morning urged fellow Democrats to say when asked if the Majority will join the House GOP in supporting an earmark freeze.) And some reports suggest the Speaker will only embrace a ban on earmarks in appropriations bills, allowing business as usual to continue when it comes to earmarks in tax and authorizing bills – which, obviously, would not be a real earmark moratorium.

Whether we succeed or fail in achieving an immediate moratorium on all earmarks before the Easter break, House Republicans will continue to press for real change in the way Congress operates. Remind your constituents about this during the break. We’ll fight to:

- **Make the Ethics Committee Work.** Led by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), House Republicans put forth an ethics reform plan that was not just an alternative to the flawed “outside ethics entity” rammed through the House illegitimately by Speaker Pelosi; it was a superior plan altogether. Instead of adding a new layer of unaccountable bureaucracy on top of a non-functioning Ethics Committee, the House GOP ethics proposal would have strengthened the Ethics Committee by making it more transparent and accountable, and turning cases stalled by partisan gridlock over directly to federal law enforcement authorities within 90 days. Our colleague Zach Wamp also has a worthy proposal to strengthen the Ethics Committee. These alternatives were never even debated, because the Democratic leaders refused to allow these proposals to come to a vote.
- **Stop Wasteful Earmarks.** In addition to supporting an immediate freeze on all taxpayer-funded earmarks, House Republicans have called for a permanent end to so-called “monuments to me” (earmarks for projects named after Members of Congress), unscrutinized “airdropped” earmarks inserted into House-Senate conference reports, and other reforms that will change the earmark process as we know it. In addition to blocking a vote on the GOP-proposed moratorium, Democratic leaders have refused to support these reforms, which have already been adopted unilaterally by House Republicans.
- **Close Ethics Loopholes for Members-Elect.** Members of Congress hold a position of public trust, as do Members-elect. But while Members of Congress are subject to both House gift rules and the gift ban in federal law, Members-elect are not. This loophole – exploited by Sen. Hillary Clinton and other Democrats now serving in Congress before they were sworn in – is a perfect example of the hollowness of the Democrats’ reforms. It should be closed. When the House returns, I will support the introduction of legislation to close it.

The American people have every right to expect the highest possible ethical standards from their Congress. The Democrat-led Congress is lowering the bar. With your help, Republicans will lead where the Democratic majority has failed.

Sincerely,



John Boehner (R-OH)
Republican Leader