

## THE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

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# THE BUDGET BOONDOGGLE AWARD

## WINNERS FOR 2007

31 January 2008

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### ‘ACHIEVEMENTS’ OF THE 110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

Despite claims to the contrary, earmarks continued to proliferate in the fiscal year 2008 spending bills. In fact, the Omnibus and Department of Defense [DOD] Appropriations bills included at least 11,000 earmarks at a cost of more than \$14 billion to taxpayers. Some outside watchdog groups placed the number and cost of earmarks at even higher levels. By any measure, it is clear that the problems with congressional earmarking have not yet been solved.

From a long list of highly “qualified” candidates, the 2007 Budget Boondoggle Award goes to two winners – two particularly wasteful and unnecessary earmarks in the DOD Appropriations bill. The winners are:

- ***The Ferry to Nowhere*** – a \$20-million earmark for a craft connecting the Alaskan communities of Anchorage and Port MacKenzie – serving a total of 40 residents.
- ***The National Drug Intelligence Center’s “jobs program”*** – a \$39-million earmark for a duplicative program that the President has sought to eliminate since at least 2005.

Details about these winners are furnished on the following pages, along with an Honorable Mention for the fiscal year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations bill.

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## 2007 BUDGET BOONDOGGLE AWARD WINNER # 1

### THE “FERRY TO NOWHERE” (\$20 Million)

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- This earmark will pay for a ferry to connect Anchorage with Port MacKenzie on the rural Alaskan peninsula of Matanuska-Susitna Borough – ostensibly to test, for the Navy, how well the vessel could cut through ice. The ferry connects the same route as one of the celebrated, and previously abandoned, “Bridges to Nowhere.”
- The ferry will reduce an approximately 2-hour drive to a trip of around 30 minutes – for the benefit of the *40 people* who are employed on the peninsula.
- The Office of Naval Research [ONR] did not request the funding and had actually rejected a similar proposal, saying that the project was not a high priority.
- Despite the Navy’s rejection, this earmark received \$20 million in this year’s DOD Appropriations bill, on top of nearly \$50 million that was included for this project in appropriations bills between 2002 and 2006.
- To make the ferry more “appropriate” for the Defense Appropriations bill, it was dubbed “an expeditionary craft” by the Ranking Member of the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. Most proponents acknowledge, however, that it will ultimately be used as a commercial ferry.
- In a time of war and deficit spending, this earmark begs the question: when did the Navy – already fully committed to the Global War on Terrorism – begin building commercial ferries?



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## 2007 BUDGET BOONDOGGLE AWARD WINNER #2

### THE NDIC 'JOBS PROGRAM' (\$39 Million)

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- The National Drug Intelligence Center [NDIC] was established in 1993 to collect and coordinate intelligence from law enforcement agencies, providing a strategic look on the war on drugs. Its role duplicates the efforts of other agencies, such as the El Paso Intelligence Center. But despite this, it has continued to receive funding for the past 15 years.
- An administration official recently described the NDIC as “slow to delineate a unique or useful role within the drug intelligence community.” Last year, the House Government Reform Committee described the center’s budget as “an expensive and duplicative use of scarce Federal drug enforcement resources.”
- Due to the problems with the NDIC, the President – since at least 2005 – has proposed shutting down the facility; and his fiscal year 2008 budget again proposed to do so.
- But instead of eliminating the center, this congressional earmark directs \$39 million to *expand* NDIC operations in 2008.
- Not only is this bad policy, but *the earmark is in the wrong bill*: the NDIC falls within the Justice Department’s Drug Enforcement Administration, not under the jurisdiction of the DOD. Perhaps coincidentally, the earmark was requested by the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman.
- The Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman added an additional 43 earmarks to the DOD Appropriations bill at a cost of \$80 million more in taxpayer dollars.



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## **2007 BUDGET BOONDOGGLE AWARD – HONORABLE MENTION THE BLOATED OMNIBUS**

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No year-end Budget Boondoggle Award would be complete without a mention of the Majority's bloated Omnibus Appropriations bill. This legislation was a disaster on many levels. The bill not only contained thousands of wasteful earmarks, it also failed to eliminate many of the duplicative and wasteful programs highlighted by Committee Republicans in the original Budget Boondoggle Award in October 2007.

To make matters worse, the Omnibus represented an abuse of the appropriations process.

For its many problems, the Omnibus Appropriations bill is given an Honorable Mention in the Budget Boondoggle competition.

### **Failure on Earmarks**

- **Nearly 9,000 Earmarks.** The Omnibus included 8,967 earmarks at a cost of \$7.5 billion to taxpayers.
- **Nearly 300 Air-Dropped Earmarks.** Among the thousands of earmarks were 298 “air-drops” – added in conference, dodging scrutiny by committees and House Members – at a cost of \$809 million.
- **Hundreds of Earmarks for Nonfederal Priorities.** The numerous nonfederal priorities funded by earmarks include the following:
  - *Thirty-four earmarks* for museums and museum exhibits (\$7 million).
  - *Twenty-five earmarks* for sidewalks and streetscapes (\$8.6 million).
  - *Twenty-one earmarks* for bike paths and trails (\$11.6 million).
  - *Twenty earmarks* for the YMCA (\$4.9 million).
  - *Twelve earmarks* for weed and animal waste management (\$5.2 million).
  - *Three earmarks* for fruit fly research (\$748,000).
  - *Two earmarks* for pools and aquatic centers (\$418,000).

### **Failure to Eliminate Wasteful and Duplicative Spending Programs**

- **Numerous Boondoggle Candidates Survive.** When the Budget Boondoggle Award was launched last year, the announcement included a range of highly “qualified” candidates

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for the award. Yet many of these programs continue to receive funding in the Omnibus. These programs, which are wasting resources much better spent on priorities such as homeland security, veterans, and education, include the following:

- *The Advanced Technology Program [ATP].* The President and House Republicans proposed to eliminate this form of corporate welfare, and it was deauthorized early in 2007. Nevertheless, the Omnibus funded it at \$65 million.
- *The National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs [NCACA] Program.* This program, which provides non-competitive grants to Washington, DC cultural organizations, such as the Kennedy Center, that already receive substantial contributions from nonfederal sources, was funded at \$8.5 million, 20 percent more than 2007.
- *The Federal Citizens Information Center [FCIC].* This center, which gives out information about how to get a good airfare deal and how to buy a car, was funded at \$17.3 million, a 16-percent increase from 2007.
- *OMB Program Eliminations Ignored.* In the President's fiscal year 2008 budget, the Office of Management and Budget [OMB] recommended the elimination of 91 government programs consistently identified as duplicative or ineffective. This would have saved \$4.9 billion in taxpayer dollars. But the Omnibus continued to fund 85 of these 91 programs, leaving \$4.8 billion of the potential savings untouched. To make matters worse, many of these programs actually received funding *increases*.
- *PART Ratings Ignored.* In 2007, the administration's Program Assessment Rating Tool [PART] rated 25 programs as ineffective for their failure to achieve their goals. The Omnibus increased funding for 13 of these 25 programs, without increasing oversight.

### **Failure on Process**

- **Seventy-Nine Days Overdue.** The Omnibus was not passed until 19 December, 79 days (nearly three months) *after* the start of the fiscal year, on 1 October.
- **No Time to Read.** The Omnibus was filed after midnight the day of the vote, leaving Members without time to read its contents.
- **Eleven Bills in One.** The Omnibus combined 11 of the 12 regular appropriations bills, subjecting the whole package – totaling more than a half trillion dollars – to a single up-or-down vote. This denied Members the opportunity to vote on the merits of each appropriations bill individually.
- **More Than 3,400 Pages.** The Omnibus was more than 3,400 pages long, and weighed in at more than 34 pounds.

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- **Gimmicks.** The bill included approximately \$20 billion in gimmicks intended to artificially lower the cost of the bill. Examples include:
    - *\$11.2 billion* in “emergency” spending that is exempt from budget limits.
    - *\$2 billion* worth of “advance appropriations” – money provided in 2008 that will not be spent or counted until fiscal year 2009.
    - *\$7.4 billion* in phony savings.
  
  - **Martial Law.** The Omnibus was filed under “martial law,” a procedure denying Members the opportunity to review the bill and allowing only one hour of debate.