



Press Release

Earmarks Are Back, Legislating Is Not

ANGELA KUCK | MARCH 11, 2022

As the fiscal year 2022 omnibus bill makes clear, congressional earmarks are back with a vengeance—albeit with new restrictions and transparency measures. In a new insight, Director of Fiscal Policy Gordon Gray considers the return of the earmark—and whether Congress can avoid a return to its earmark-abusing past.

Key points:

- Appropriations bills used to be vehicles for earmarks, or “pork,” which were generally understood to be narrow spending requests that benefited Members’ districts and States.
- A long-standing perquisite and tool for legislators, the practice was widely perceived to have been abused in the early and mid-2000s, leading to congressional corruption scandals.
- The 112th Congress instituted a moratorium on earmarking that held for a decade.
- The current Congress has reinstated earmarking and Congress has embraced the practice with bicameral, bipartisan enthusiasm, with over 3,000 earmark requests in the House, and over 8,000 earmark requests in the Senate for fiscal year 2022.

[Read the analysis](#)