



FEDERATION OF AMERICAN CONSUMERS AND TRAVELERS - NEWS RELEASE -

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What are “Earmarks” -- and Who Benefits?

EDWARDSVILLE, IL, December 23, 2009 - Although virtually every Washington legislator takes a public stance against “earmarks,” they continue to flourish unabated.

The Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT) has published a report of earmark spending, state by state, on its Web site, noting that the latest numbers available, for fiscal year 2008, totaled more than \$16 billion.

Vicki Rolens, managing director of the not-for-profit consumer association, says, “A lot of people who contact FACT want to know exactly what an ‘earmark’ is ... and, more important, how they as consumers are affected.”

She says the definition is fairly simple. “Typically, an earmark is buried in legislation with the purpose of steering money to a particular organization or project in a given legislator’s home state or district. Quite often, the earmark has no relationship whatsoever to the bill in which it is buried. The main idea is to get something through which probably couldn’t pass muster on its own merits.”

How are consumers affected?

“Well,” says Rolens, “if you are connected with the organization or project which is being funded, you will probably realize financial gain in one form or another. If you’re not connected, then it’s just money out of your taxpayer pocket and another contribution to the national debt.”

Where do most earmarks go?

“According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB),” say Rolens, “the primary beneficiary, by far, is California. That state received more than \$1.1 billion in earmarks. Ohio and Texas were in a virtual tie for second, with Virginia not far behind.”

On a per-capita basis,, the biggest “winners” are (in order): Alaska, North Dakota, West Virginia, Mississippi and the District of Columbia. Those states receiving the fewest earmarks per-capita are Florida and Arizona.

The Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT) is a consumer organization, formed under the not-for-profit corporation laws of the District of Columbia in 1984. It serves more than 1 million consumers nationwide. Additional information on FACT may be found in the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, and by visiting the association's Web site (www.usafact.org). Informative, unbiased news bulletins are regularly disseminated by FACT to help its members remain current on matters which might seriously impact their lives. The association does not offer support to -- and does not receive support from -- any political party or movement. In addition to publishing consumer-related reports, the association provides more than 30 benefits for its members, ranging from [medical insurance](#) and [dental discounts](#) to [prescription drug savings](#) and [scholarships](#). FACT’s administrative office is located at 318 Hillsboro Avenue, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

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