



## Senate Committee Approves Feinstein Measure to Reform Earmark Process

*- Feinstein amendment restores 60-vote threshold to waive out of scope earmark provisions -*

February 28, 2006

**Washington, DC** –The Senate Rules Committee today unanimously approved a proposal by U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) to require 60 votes for any provision (earmark or otherwise) added to conference report that is not contained in the original Senate or House version of the bill. The measure was part of a larger package on lobby reform that was unanimously voted out of committee this morning.

**“The time has come for a change in the way Congress does business,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“That is why it is so important that we move forward with making these changes to the Senate rules. The measure I introduced will help ensure that earmarks are not added in the dead of night, without full scrutiny from the House or Senate. Congress must demonstrate to the American people that the public interest is the only interest that Members and staff are serving.”**

The Feinstein amendment strikes a provision in the underlying bill that required only a simple majority of votes to retain an out of scope provision (earmark or otherwise) in a conference report and replaces it with a 60 vote threshold. If the point of order is sustained, the item would be stricken from the conference report, but the conference report itself would not fail. It would be passed back to the House for a vote, minus whatever items are deleted. The measure is consistent with a bipartisan Senate resolution introduced by Senator Feinstein together with Senate Rules Committee Chairman Senator Trent Lott (R-Miss.) last month.

### **Lobby Reform Bill Summary**

The lobby reform package approved by the Senate Rules Committee today includes a measure cosponsored by Senators Feinstein and Lott to reform out of scope earmarks. It would:

- Require 60 votes to waive a point of order to strike an out of scope earmark provision from a conference report.
- Create a new Standing Rule of the Senate that defines earmarks as non-federal entities receiving dollar assistance.

- Require conference reports to list earmark sponsors and their justification of the earmark.

The legislation also includes the following provisions:

- **Elimination of access to the floor for former members who are now lobbyists.**
- **Prohibition of K Street Project:** The bill clarifies that it is illegal for Members or their staff to attempt to influence private sector employment decisions in exchange for political access.
- **Ban on gifts from Lobbyists:** The bill prohibits gifts from lobbyists, but permits gifts from foreign dignitaries and personal friends under existing dollar limits. It also maintains the \$50 limit on lobbyist hosted meals, but requires that members disclose on their website the meals that they and their staff accept.
- **Ban on lobbyist funded travel:** Allows travel sponsored by groups that do not lobby with approval from the Ethics Committee. Additional disclosure required after completion of trip.
- **Travel restrictions and disclosure:** For Members using private aircraft, the bill requires additional disclosure including the date of the flight, the owner of the plane, the destination and purpose of the trip, and the passengers aboard.
- **Establishment of post-employment restrictions:** Bans senior staff (those making 75% or more of the rate of pay for a Member) from lobbying the Senate for one year. The bill also includes a provision that requires further disclosure of employer negotiations when a Senate staffer leaves the Hill.
- **Prohibition of staff interaction with Member's spouse or other family members who are registered lobbyists.**

The bill also includes a Sense of Senate that the lobbying rules that apply to the Senate should apply to the House and the executive branch.

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