

If you don't regularly receive my reports, request a free subscription at [steve\\_bakke@comcast.net](mailto:steve_bakke@comcast.net) !  
Follow me on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/@BakkeSteve> and receive links to my posts and more!  
Visit my website at <http://www.myslantonthings.com> !

## **SHOULD EARMARKS BE RECONSIDERED?**

By Stephen L. Bakke  January 15, 2018



*Here's what provoked me:*

*There are times government needs to accomplish important things like tax reform, healthcare payment reform, or immigration reform. In 2010 the much maligned and hated "legislative earmarks" process was banned. Did that action end up frustrating those working for truly important bipartisan legislation? Some former opponents of earmarks are wishing they had that former process back.*

*Here's my response:*

### **Should Legislative Earmarks Be Reconsidered?**

I want a smooth-running government. Differences of opinion and vigorous debate are healthy, but the process should eventually lead to results, with both parties feeling at least some success and a willingness to approach the next legislative challenge with a bipartisan attitude.

In 2010 the House Appropriations Committee implemented rules to ban "legislative earmarks" because they had become synonymous with "pork-barrel spending" and corruption. Some legislators once opposed to earmarks now admit the ban made Washington more dysfunctional, with legislators losing their "purpose" of advocating for their constituents' "piece of the pie." They speculate that earmarks might be an important tool for bridging irreconcilable differences.

Contrary to what I originally thought, the earmark moratorium hasn't reduced spending. "Legislative earmarks" refers to the process which leads to allocating approved federal spending in a manner favoring certain states or legislative districts. Those same funds are still spent, but now federal bureaucrats, not legislators, are making the allocation decisions. Think about that. The transparency once available, even in the earmarks process, has disappeared.

Might we be closer to a bipartisan healthcare solution, or immigration reform, if our representatives had more bargaining flexibility? Would a different, less corruptible form of earmarks facilitate bipartisan cooperation?