U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 25, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-132, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

The earmark process in Congress has become a symbol of a broken Washington. Wasteful pork-barrel spending has outraged American families and eroded public confidence in our institution. Both of our parties bear responsibility for this failure.

We write tonight to notify you that House Republicans believe that the earmark system should be brought to an immediate halt, and a bipartisan select committee should immediately be established for the purpose of identifying ways to bring fundamental change to the way in which Washington spends taxpayers' money.

In the spirit of bipartisan cooperation fostered by our recent cooperation on a short-term economic growth package, we offer our hope that you and the members of the House Democratic Caucus will join House Republicans in supporting these steps, which are urgently needed to begin the process of fixing Washington's broken spending practices and restoring trust between the American people and their elected leaders. We respectfully ask that you and your Caucus consider these urgently-needed actions and join us in supporting them by the conclusion of your Caucus retreat next week.

In the interim, until a complete earmark moratorium is in place and a bipartisan panel is formed to identify ways to fix Washington's wasteful pork-barrel spending habits, House Republicans will proceed with the adoption of a series of earmark reform standards we will insist that all House Republican members honor. These earmark reform standards include:

- No more "monuments to me." Lawmakers should not use taxpayer money to fund projects named after themselves.
- No more "airdrops." The process by which Congress spends the American people's money should be completely transparent. Members of Congress should not circumvent transparency by airdropping earmarks into bills in conference at the last minute.

- No more "fronts" or "pass-through" entities. Taxpayer funds should not be laundered through "front" operations that mask their true recipients.

- Members of Congress who request earmarks should put forth a plan detailing exactly how the money will be spent and why they believe the use of taxpayer funding is justified. Members of Congress who "secure" earmarks should place these plans in the Congressional Record well in advance of floor votes on those earmarks.

- To improve accountability, Members of Congress should require outside earmark recipients to put up "matching funds" where applicable so that American taxpayers do not bear all the risk for such expenditures.

- The Executive Branch should be held accountable for its own earmark practices. The Executive Branch asks for earmarks, too, and has done so under administrations Democratic and Republican alike. Members of Congress should hold present and future Administrations accountable for the way in which taxpayer-funded earmarks are used.

It is our hope that you and your members will discuss and move quickly to adopt similar standards during your Caucus retreat.

The American people believe Washington is broken. Bold action must be taken to show them we can fix it. We believe the actions House Republicans are taking today can be a starting point for this kind of change. We hope that by the end of your own Caucus retreat next week, you and all House Democrats will join us in supporting an immediate moratorium on all earmarks and the immediate formation of a bipartisan panel for the purpose of identifying ways to end wasteful pork-barrel spending in Washington and bring needed change to the way in which Congress spends taxpayers' hard-earned money.

Sincerely,

John A. Boehner
Republican Leader

Roy Blunt
Republican Whip

Adam Putnam
Chairman, Republican Conference

Thaddeus McCotter
Chairman, Republican Policy Committee

Kay Granger
Vice-Chair, Republican Conference

John Carter
Secretary, Republican Conference

Tom Cole
Chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee

Eric Cantor
Chief Deputy Whip

David Dreier
Ranking Republican, Committee on Rules