

Washington, Feb 24, 2009 - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence released the following statement following the introduction of the 'omnibus' spending bill, extending his moratorium on requesting earmarks to include Fiscal Year 2010:

"After years of wasteful government spending, under Republicans and Democrats alike, it is clear to most Hoosiers that the way Congress spends the people's money is broken-particularly when it comes to earmarking. The latest omnibus spending bill introduced in Congress with thousands of unexamined earmarks totaling hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars epitomizes an appropriations process that is still deeply flawed.

"I believe that the appropriations process needs to be one that is transparent-open, fair and responsible. The American People and Hoosiers from every walk of life deserve to be able to see how their tax dollars are being spent. Unfortunately, recent experience has been that billions of dollars of unvetted earmarks are too often included at the 11th hour as part of massive spending bills, the provisions of which receive scant hours of public debate and scrutiny before the final vote is called.

"To be clear, I am not saying that all earmarking is wrong. Congress is charged with the authority to spend the people's money in ways both large and small. However, each earmark ought to be publicly accessible with enough time for a full examination before Congress votes. Sadly, this has not been the case.

"The current system allows earmarks to be requested for projects thousands of miles away from the districts that the requesting member represents, and it has led to earmarks being tied to numerous instances of waste and public corruption. As elected officials, we owe our constituents a system that discourages abuse by allowing the sunlight of transparency time to shine into the dark corners of appropriations bills well before votes are held.

"Throughout my career in Congress, I have sought to meet the high ethical standard of transparency and accountability which Members of Congress are charged to uphold. I was one of the first in Congress to post appropriations requests on my website and I have never traded my vote for an earmark. For years, I have advocated for earmark reform and have opposed leaders in both parties when I felt Congress was using the power of the federal purse in fiscally irresponsible ways.

"My frustration with the status quo led me to declare a one-year moratorium from requesting earmarks last year. While some progress has been made, there is still too little accountability and too much waste in a process that is still too opaque. It is time to end earmarking as we know it-we must restore public confidence in how we spend the people's money. It is because I believe that Hoosiers and all Americans deserve better that I am renewing my commitment to remove myself from the system while continuing to push for reform of the earmark process.

"As we move forward, it is my hope that Congressional leaders will embrace bipartisan calls for transparency and accountability once and for all to an area where true reform is so desperately needed."