

# Fiscal Year 2011 Earmarks Revisited: Can states live without them?

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Earlier in the year, House Republicans decided to establish a moratorium on all federal funding, or earmark, requests. Two weeks ago, the [United State Senate voted](#) 56 to 39 in favor of banning earmarks for two years; however, 67 votes were needed to pass the moratorium. While the House Republicans move was purely voluntary, the vote would have made the ban enforceable. Earlier this year in July, GovWin published a report entitled "[Congressional Public Safety Funding Requests – A Billion Dollar Lifeline](#)", which discussed the fiscal year 2011 funding requests and the implications this money would have on state and local governments, who by and large, could have desperately used the funding the earmarks would provide.

With the failure of the earmark votes in Congress, will states now receive the funding requests they had previously made to move forward with hundreds of valuable public safety projects? Many states, including Mississippi really hope that they do receive this money. Mississippi relies on many of these earmarks to move forward with projects that it could not afford, many of which are important such as a marijuana detection program to eradicate to growing of the illegal substance.

As GovWin reported in July, nearly one billion dollars were requested for the Justice and Public Safety sector alone, which is not exactly a small number, especially when you consider that nearly \$130 billion dollars in earmarks were requested in total. Many states have budgets that are in the red, and the receipt of these funds is essential to continue many statewide interoperable radio initiatives, in car camera projects, information sharing software and even personnel and training for law enforcement agencies. Without these funds, many agencies will need to cut their workforce which would be even more devastating due to the difficulty in finding new jobs in this tough economy.

Overall, earmarks account for one percent of the Federal Budget and advocates argue that banning them would not actually "save taxpayers any money [and] reduces transparency," [according to Republican Senator James Inhofe](#) from Oklahoma. By making earmark requests open and transparent and giving senators and congressmen the ability to provide their local districts with funding for important projects, power is being shifted into the hands of state and local governments.

The fiscal year 2011 earmarks will likely pass and be given to the requested agencies. In a time when the economy as a whole is not booming and state and local governments are hurting, it is not the time to withhold funds from desperate agencies. Moving forward in the future, Congress needs to continue the debate on earmarks and determine a more appropriate approach, including additional transparency.