Let me give you just a couple of examples. There was $1.6 million for the City of Bastrop, Louisiana. According to the Bastrop Daily Enterprise, ''The money is officially earmarked for the purchase of bulletproof vests and body armor. Bulletproof vests only cost about $700 to $800, however, so $1.6 million would appear to be overkill.'' Police Chief Curtis Stephenson agrees, conceding, ''There's no way we need that kind of money just to put all our people in vests.'' Again, this was an earmark for bulletproof vests for the police officers in this city, and the city comes back and says, We don't have that many police officers.

We are told that these earmarks are vetted. How are they vetted? The answer is they are really not. They are not vetted by that party; they aren't vetted by this party. It's more of a game of ''Can you catch me with my hand in the cookie jar or not?''

Earlier this year, when I was challenging a couple of earmarks on the floor, one Member who had one of the earmarks I was going to challenge beat me to the floor to withdraw his own earmark because he didn't want the scrutiny that would come if that earmark were publicly debated. Later that same week, the Appropriations Committee, when they found out certain other earmarks might be challenged on the floor, called the Rules Committee and struck some other earmarks that were to be debated on the House floor because they couldn't withstand the scrutiny. That isn't vetting. That is hoping that your hand isn't caught in the cookie jar.

Now we have this bill today with over 9,000 of these earmarks. Now, the majority will say, Hey, that is a 17 percent reduction in the number of earmarks in our worst year. Put another way, that's like saying, You know, last year I smoked five packs a day and I am down to three this year. I darn-well quit. That is hardly something to pat ourselves on the back about.

Put another way, we have just 17 percent fewer earmarks than the worst year in congressional history for earmarking. Please don't use this side of the aisle as a bar with which to judge yourselves. That is a bar that a snake could crawl over. We didn't handle ourselves well in the majority with regard to earmarks. That is one of the big reasons we find ourselves in the minority today. But when the new majority came into power in January of this year, we were told that we would have transparency, that we would have names next to earmarks, that there would be time to actually discuss these earmarks and debate them, that if there were earmarks air-dropped into a bill, there would be an opportunity to strike all earmarks, at least one vote.

We don't have that today because this isn't a conference report. You simply have to change the name of the bill that is coming to the floor and you obviate your obligation to live by your own rules. That is simply not right. It's nothing that we should be proud of.

I mentioned earlier on the floor today that an astute Member of Congress told me yesterday one of the toughest parts of being a Member of Congress is to remember what we should be outraged about. I would submit that this is something that we should be outraged about, but we are not. We blithely pass it as if this is standard business. It shouldn't be. It shouldn't have been for us when we were in the majority, and it shouldn't be for the new majority.

It was in a press report yesterday that some Members were upset, I think justifiably, that there seemed to be just a few Members getting all the earmarks. They mentioned in the press article that a lot of the earmarks are going to the vulnerable Members instead of to the established Members in their district.

I would say that that is something I think outside of the Beltway people say that is just wrong, for money to go to Members just to be re-elected. But here, unfortunately, we see that and say, Hey, that is one of the noblest purposes we have seen for earmarks. Usually they're tied to campaign contributions or something else.

We need a moratorium on earmarks. We should pass a CR rather than this omnibus and go into next year without these 9,000 earmarks.

□ 1245

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 18, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on December 18, 2007, at 11:42 p.m.:

Senate concurred in House amendment No. (2) with an amendment H.R. 2764.

Senate concurred in House amendment No. (1) H.R. 2764.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

LORRAINE C. MILLER,
Clerk of the House.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Secretary be directed to request the House to return to the Senate the bill and all accompanying papers relative to (H.R. 2764) ''An Act making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.'', and that upon the compliance of the request, the Secretary of the Senate be authorized to make corrections in the engrossment of the aforesaid bill.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENT TO HOUSE AMENDMENT TO SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2764, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008 (CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008) AND FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 72, FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts.

As I stand here, I am looking at the lights in this Chamber and I must say to my colleagues that they are very bright. Symbolically, then, as we stand here on the floor of the House, we should be transparent, the lights should be on, and we should tell the truth. And so it is important for me to just hold up a summary of the works of the Democrats who worked without ceasing to reestablish priorities so that the maligned omnibus bill that my good friends on the other side of the aisle are talking about all the bad things, really, they are not shedding the light on the truth. Let me share with you simply what we have tried to do in the midst of opposition and obstructionism.

I wish the administration would have collaborated with us, but we fought hard. And so out of this work comes increased medical research, $607 million for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and diabetes, which hits the 18th Congressional District in insurmountable numbers.

Health care of $1 billion above the President's request that will focus resources in St. Joseph's Hospital and Doctors Hospital and potentially community health clinics that have worked on, like the Martin Luther King Community Health Clinic which needs additional dollars because of the increasing numbers of health problems in my congressional district. In K–12, my congressional district has the highest percentage of those students on title I in the State of Texas, and we have been able to increase that by $767 million.

In addition, I went to the University of Houston to talk to those students who were standing in throngs asking about college aid, and I made a promise to them that we would not abandon their opportunity for their future and their desires and their dreams. And so this bill gives $1.7 billion above the