

## PAY-TO-PLAY POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, over the past several weeks, the political world has been rocked by a scandal that led to the impeachment of the Governor of Illinois. At issue was the specter of pay-to-play, more specifically the possibility that political favors were either promised or exchanged, exchanged for campaign contributions.

The vote to remove Governor Blagojevich by the Illinois Senate was unanimous. Condemnation from Capitol Hill was equally swift and unequivocal. Pay-to-play politics should have no place.

Fast forward just a few weeks.

We now know that the Department of Justice is conducting an investigation into the propriety of campaign contributions made by individuals associated with the powerhouse lobbying firm the PMA Group, individuals who have contributed nearly 3.3 million to the campaigns and political action committees of many Members in this body. Within days of the announcement of the FBI investigation, the PMA Group, which had revenues of more than 15 million just last year, imploded.

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So what would cause those associated with the PMA Group to contribute millions of dollars to Members of Congress? Here's what the public sees; press reports that nearly nine in 10 Members who made earmark requests in the fiscal year 2008 Defense Appropriation bill for clients of the PMA Group also received campaign contributions from those associated with the PMA Group. Those earmark requests resulted in nearly \$300 million in earmark money for PMA clients.

Mr. Speaker, much has been made of the rule changes in the 110th Congress that add transparency to the process of earmarking. As one who had sought these changes for years, I was the first to applaud when these new rules were adopted. Sunlight always illuminates, but it doesn't always disinfect. We now see what scurries around our feet, but we seem unwilling to grab a broom and clean house.

Let me illustrate. Less than 6 months ago, we approved the Defense Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2009 as part of a so-called "minibus." Some 48 hours before the bill was to be considered on the House floor, we learned that it contained more than 2,000 House earmarks, none of which had been considered by the full House Appropriations Committee. The minibus was considered as an amendment to the Senate bill, and therefore not a single earmark challenge was allowed. We now know, of course, that multiple earmarks in the minibus were secured for clients of the PMA Group. In addition, several earmarks in the minibus went to

Kuchera Industries, a PMA client that is also being investigated by the Department of Justice.

So here we are today, Mr. Speaker, about to consider an omnibus appropriations bill that contains more than 8,000 earmarks. It should be noted that we received the earmark list just hours ago. Of course, it's impossible to dig through 8,000 earmarks before the bill comes to the floor on Wednesday. But this much we know: In the list of earmarks we received are several earmarks worth millions of dollars for clients of the PMA Group.

What else is in this bill? What other embarrassing details are just waiting for concerned citizens, enterprising reporters or curious Justice Department officials to discover?

A short while ago, I noticed a privileged resolution on this situation. This is not a partisan resolution because this is not a partisan issue. I would implore my colleagues not to treat it as such. The "whereas" clauses mention no party or Member. The "resolve" clauses simply ask the Ethics Committee to investigate the relationship between earmarks and campaign contributions so that we can determine if the rules that we have in the House are adequate to maintain the dignity of the House.

We see enduring examples of Members on both sides of the aisle taking their responsibility as stewards of taxpayer money very seriously. But when we are seen to be earmarking funds to campaign donors, we give unnecessary fodder to those who would question our motives.

Some may argue that the absence of a visible quid pro quo with regard to earmarks and campaign contributions absolves us from our responsibility to take action on this resolution. After all, investigations are moving ahead; shouldn't they just take their course? This is certainly an option, but consider the cost to the reputation of this body. Should Department of Justice investigations, indictments and convictions be the standard for taking action to uphold the dignity of the House?

Mr. Speaker, we owe far more to this institution than we are giving it. Let's pass this resolution and give this institution the respect and dignity it deserves.

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 THE STIMULUS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, as we left town right before the Presidents' Day recess, many of us spoke on the floor of this House about the issue of what was then the issue of the day, the issue before the House, the stimulus bill, the spending bill, the "jobs bill," as it was described, but a bill that unfortunately contained much more Federal spending than anything else.

This bill was posted on a Web site late in the night. It was not posted in a forum that was searchable by any Member of Congress. And you heard over and over again on the floor of this House a little over a week ago how no one in this House had been able to adequately peruse the bill—indeed, read the bill—before it came to a vote that Friday before last.

The bill came to us late in the night. There seemed to be a great rush about getting it done—after all, the country is in dire trouble, people are needing this legislation to be passed—and then we all took a 3-day weekend; the Speaker took off to points unknown in Italy; the President took a vacation back home. And then finally, the day after Presidents' Day, the following Tuesday, the 17th, the bill was signed into law.

We were then informed by several of the Federal agencies charged with dispensing this money and getting it out quickly into the economy to quickly have that stimulative effect that it is purported to have on the economy, well, we're told that many of those Federal agencies, it will take some time for them to promulgate the rules and set forth the rules under which this money is to be distributed amongst the Federal agencies. And it, indeed, may be the early part of the summer before some of this stimulus money actually makes it into the economy.

I noticed in my home paper, the Dallas Morning News, today a gentleman wrote in—I assume it was tongue in cheek—he said, being in his advanced stage, he felt that he might be one of those shovel-ready projects that was mentioned in the stimulus bill. I am going to assume that that was a light-hearted remark on his part. But it brings to mind a more serious nature of what we are facing.

And we've heard it so many times over the past month's time, the amount of money, \$787 billion contained in this bill—more if you factor in the cost of capital, the cost of financing this bill, then the cost goes up to \$1.1 or \$1.2 trillion. The bill has built-in funding cliffs where if you really were honest about the amount of funding it would require to continue this stimulus bill over the actual life of the bill, we're probably talking about a bill that's closer to \$3 trillion. And \$3 trillion is \$3 trillion that we don't have sitting in the Federal Treasury waiting to be dispensed. This is, in fact, money that will have to come from somewhere.

Where is it going to come from? Well, it's going to come from the United States selling public debt. And the good news is that debt is still a saleable commodity on the world market, that people are still willing to purchase our debt. The good news is that they are still willing to purchase our debt and the interest rate has not risen significantly. But those days will only last so long because consider what is just right around the corner. You heard