

I want to share an op-ed that I wrote for the Nashville Tennessean and appeared in that paper on May 19 about the importance of asking Congress to fund Tennessee projects. Following is the text of that article:

In 2007, the Corps of Engineers told me that two big flood control dams on the Cumberland River system were near failure. I asked for and Congress approved \$120 million to begin repairing Center Hill and Wolf Creek Dams.

During the recent flood, these repairs kept water levels higher behind these dams, which in turn kept millions of gallons out of the Cumberland River. According to the Corps, if Wolf Creek Dam had failed, flooding in Nashville would have been 4 feet higher. My \$120 million appropriation request was called an "earmark."

Here is another "earmark." In 2003, 40 Clarksville community leaders visited me in Washington. They and the commander of the 101st Airborne, GEN David Petraeus, wanted new housing for soldiers returning from Iraq. This was their top priority, but the money was not in President George W. Bush's budget. Over 3 years, I asked for \$196 million. Congress approved. By 2007, when the most-deployed troops in America came home, new housing was ready.

Some say abolishing such earmarks will help solve Washington's out-of-control spending. I say this is a hoax, for two reasons:

1. Abolishing earmarks doesn't reduce the Federal debt one penny. If I ask for a Tennessee project and Congress approves, other spending in the budget is reduced by an equal amount. This debate over earmarks is a sideshow. The main show is the Democratic budget that would double the Federal debt in 5 years and triple it in 10. The way to control Federal spending is, first, to limit growth of discretionary spending to 2 percent a year—40 percent of the budget—and, second, to slow down automatic entitlement spending—most of the rest of the budget. Earmarks total 1 percent of all spending—and, again, earmarks add zero to total spending.

2. Under article I of the U.S. Constitution, only Congress—not the President—appropriates funds. When Tennesseans come to see me about making Center Hill and Wolf Creek Dams safe or improving housing at Fort Campbell, my job is not to give them President Obama's telephone number.

Some appropriations are vital.

Then, you might ask, why all the fuss? Because some Members of Congress have abused earmarks. Some ask for silly ones. Some ask for too many. Two were convicted of taking campaign contributions in exchange for recommending projects. Perhaps a senator is more likely to vote for a bill that includes his or her appropriations amendment—but this can be said about any amendment to any bill.

My view is that if you have a couple of bad acts on the Grand Ole Opry, you don't cancel the Opry, you cancel the acts. That is why some Congressmen lose elections and some are in jail. That is why Congress ended middle-of-the-night earmarks and even required its Members to attest that appropriations do not benefit them or their families. That is why 2 years ago I voted for a 1-year moratorium on earmarks to encourage more reforms. Now I am cosponsoring Senator Tom Coburn's legislation to put all earmarks on one Web site to make them easier to find. Tennessee projects already are on my Web site.

Some specific appropriations are vital to our State, and to our country. The Human Genome Project was an earmark. The Man-

hattan Project that won World War II was an earmark.

It might be easier for me to say, "OK, no more earmarks." Then I wouldn't have to explain them in articles like this. But how would I explain to Clarksvillians why soldiers returning from Iraq didn't get new housing or to Nashvillians why the water was 4 feet higher during the flood? Make no mistake: If I had not asked, there would not have been enough Federal money for that housing or to repair those dams.

Just last week, the President asked for specific appropriations for the gulf coast oil spill, but not for flooding in 52 Tennessee counties. I did ask, and the Senate Committee approved. I did not want Washington to overlook the worst natural disaster since the president took office just because Tennesseans are cleaning up and helping one another instead of complaining and looting. Sometimes the job I was elected to do includes asking Congress to fund worthwhile Tennessee projects.

TRIBUTE TO MATTHEW BERGER

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions of one of my staff members, Matthew Berger, during his nearly 5 years of service to the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship and to the people of this country. Matthew has decided to begin a new professional chapter in his life, and when he leaves the Senate this month, there will be a noticeable void in my staff.

Matthew began his work with the committee in September 2005, starting as a special assistant to the staff director and quickly transitioning to become a professional staff member the next year. In his role as professional staff, Matthew became my principal adviser on economic matters, and he helped me develop legislation and policy ideas on a host of issues, from the annual Federal budget process to Social Security and pensions. For the last 2 years, Matthew has served as economist and press secretary for my committee staff, a far-reaching role that afforded him the ability to display his many talents, including his strong writing style and vast knowledge of all matters pertaining to the Nation's financial system.

Over the past several years, Matthew has played a critical role in assisting me to develop and introduce legislation on a variety of issues. His research efforts were crucial in my developing the Home Office Tax Deduction Simplification Act in both the 110th and 111th Congresses, as well as numerous amendments to a variety of bills, including the recent financial regulatory reform legislation. Matthew was my lead staff member for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as well as for the yearly budget resolution, and as such, he is certainly well versed in the Senate amendment process. Matthew's efforts to promote my legislative priorities frequently helped me attract a broad coalition of cosponsors. Matthew has also helped me draft detailed editorials for several national and local Maine publications.

Prior to joining my committee staff, Matthew spent 5½ years working on tax issues for Deloitte Tax LLP and developing a solid understanding and knowledge of our Nation's tax policy, making him a tremendous asset as soon as he began his work on the Hill. As a national tax manager, Matthew advised numerous clients on the impacts of tax law, helping them anticipate and adjust to any changes in the law. During his time at Deloitte, Matthew authored several articles and portions of books, and contributed frequently to *Tax News & Views*, one of the company's publications for its clientele. Additionally, he was instrumental in the design, launch, and management of *Tax News & Views: Health Care Edition*, which highlighted recent judicial, regulatory, and tax developments regarding health care. Matthew also served as a research assistant at the Hoover Institution during his time at Stanford University, where he earned his degree in economics.

Matthew's next endeavor takes him to the National Multi Housing Council, where he will be the vice president of tax. I am confident that they will benefit greatly from Matthew's unparalleled knowledge of the Tax Code, as well as his admirable work ethic and tremendous dedication to what he does. They will also be getting a true team player—someone who establishes and cultivates strong relationships with his colleagues. And despite the whirlwind Senate schedule, Matthew frequently found the time on Monday evenings to platoon at first base for my office's softball team, "Snowe Business."

Over the past 5 years, I have been consistently impressed by Matthew's passion for public service. I am grateful for his incredible willingness to work long hours to help me prepare for hearings and meetings, and I am indebted to him for his involvement in helping shape some of the most significant domestic legislation of our lifetimes. From the economic stimulus legislation we passed last February to the financial regulatory reform bill we completed just last week, Matthew has been a key asset in a number of considerable policy matters during his time on the Hill. I will miss his tremendous contributions to my office and his remarkable analytical skills and institutional knowledge. While I am sad to see him leave, I wish both he and his beautiful wife LaNitra the best in their incredibly bright futures.

TRIBUTE TO WALTON GRESHAM, III

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to congratulate my friend, Mr. Walton Gresham, III, from Indianola, MS, who has been awarded the National Propane Gas Association's Bill Hill Award. This is a significant achievement that deserves recognition from the U.S. Senate. This award was established in honor of individuals who have made outstanding and lasting