

Letter to President Clinton

October 28, 1997

The Honorable Bill Clinton

The President

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Congress nears the end of this session, you will be receiving in short order the remaining appropriations measures for Fiscal Year 1998. I urge you to carefully review each of these bills for low-priority, unnecessary, or wasteful spending that should be eliminated using the line-item veto.

This morning, the Congress completed action on the FY 1998 Interior Appropriations Act, and I am writing to provide my recommendations for your consideration in determining which items should be eliminated from this bill. Enclosed is a list of the projects contained in the conference agreement on this measure that meet at least one of the five objective criteria which I have used for many years to evaluate spending bills.

Some of the more egregious items earmarked in this bill include:

- Section 136 of the bill directs the Army to build a bridge across the Bull River in Alaska. This bridge is to provide access to the Golden Zone Mine for students at the School of Mineral Engineering at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In addition, the Army is directed to donate, free, two 6x6 vehicles for the use of the University. The provision does not specify how much the Army is supposed to pay for these large, all-terrain vehicles, nor does it provide a cost estimate for the bridge. This single provision could cost the Army tens of millions of dollars.
- The statement of the managers contains numerous earmarks, including: \$100,000 for the Alaska Gold Rush Centennial; \$700,000 for a type I hot-shot fire crew in Alaska; \$1.925 million for redevelopment of the obsolete fire center in Billings, Montana; \$400,000 for Alabama sturgeons; another \$400,000 for the Preble's Meadow jumping mouse; and \$300,000 for research on whirling disease; \$450,000 in various accounts for the Lewis and Clark Trail, including technical assistance and office funding; \$2 million for an Alaska mineral and geological data base, and another \$2 million for the Alaska minerals at risk project; and \$500,000 for a project at Purdue University in Indiana to improve fine hardwood trees.

These earmarks--like the hundreds of other earmarks too numerous to mention--were included in this legislation without benefit of the normal, merit-based review process that would ensure that these are the highest priority uses for the funding provided in this bill. Absent that process, it is difficult to believe that there are not other more pressing needs for federal funds than these projects.

Once again, the conferees have made clear that they endorse the language contained in either the House or Senate report, unless they mention it in the conference report. This ensures that every earmark and set-aside that is not specifically addressed by the conferees remains in place. Therefore, I urge you to also review carefully the reports of both Houses on the underlying bills.

Mr. President, once again, I urge you to exercise the line-item veto to eliminate low-priority, unnecessary, and wasteful spending from this bill.

Sincerely,

John McCain

United States Senator