



## **Giffords wants earmarks off-limits to contributors**

### **Lawmakers could not take contributions from those who get funds**

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U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona and two House colleagues introduced legislation on Wednesday to keep federal lawmakers from receiving campaign contributions from beneficiaries of their earmarks - the budget notes members of Congress often use to send millions each year for special projects back home.

The bill - co-sponsored by fellow Democrats Paul Hodes of New Hampshire and Thomas Perriello of Virginia - would bar contributions to earmark sponsors from entities including corporate executives, political action committees and lobbyists during the two years before the lawmaker was up for re-election.

"I think it is wrong for lawmakers to ask for earmarks then accept campaign contributions," Hodes said in a teleconference with reporters on Wednesday. "It raises the appearance of a conflict of interest."

Hodes said he already refuses campaign contributions from companies, their executives and family members of executives for which he has requested earmarks.

Giffords said the bill would impose tough, new ethical requirements on members of Congress.

"We must sever the connection between policy decisions and political influence," she said.

Giffords' Web site shows that she requested about \$29.7 million in southern Arizona earmarks in fiscal year 2009.

Hodes said his office has an established process for handling the hundreds of funding requests he receives, and he has been disclosing details of his funding requests on his Web site even before the House began requiring members to do so.

He said he is not opposed to earmarks, just the process that raises questions of conflict.

"I think that if done with appropriate accountability and transparency, without the appearance of conflict of interest in an open, fair process, there is a place for this kind of funding in our system," Hodes said.

Hodes also has supported a call in Congress to investigate links between campaign contributions and earmarks. So far, it hasn't happened, he said.

At Common Cause in Washington, Vice President of Legislative Affairs Sarah Dufendach said proposals such as Hodes' are tough, because "the very people who are going to have to make a 180-degree change in how they do things are the ones who are having to vote on it."

She said the advocacy group applauds anyone trying to clean up "this big mess," but called earmarks a small piece of the campaign finance problem.

Common Cause would rather have public campaign financing to remove the potential of influence peddling, and Dufendach believes Hodes' bill might help with that debate.

"The more uncomfortable it makes members of Congress to take that kind of money, the more they get uncomfortable with this system, the more likely they are to go to a public financing system, which is where we think they should go," she said.

Citizen Staff Writer Garry Duffy contributed to this article.