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**Earmarks Database Establishes Benchmark for Cutting Earmarks in Half;
Increases Transparency of Federal Spending**

WASHINGTON – Today, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) updated its earmark database with details on 13,496 earmarks totaling more than \$19 billion for Fiscal Year 2005 appropriations. This database is available to the public on OMB’s web site <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/earmarks/index.html>.

Earmarks are funds provided by Congress for projects or programs where the congressional direction in bill or report language circumvents the merit-based or competitive allocation process of the Executive Branch, or specifies the location or recipient for funding. In the last decade, earmarks have nearly tripled.

On January 3, 2007, President Bush called on Congress to cut the number and cost of earmarks by at least half this year. To help establish a benchmark for accurately measuring the President’s goal, OMB requested data on the earmarks for FY 2005 from Federal agencies.

“The database establishes a clear and transparent benchmark from which to judge the President’s goal of cutting the number and cost of earmarks by at least half. We will now be working with Congress to achieve this goal,” said OMB Director Rob Portman.

“The earmarks database is consistent with the Administration’s overall effort to bring greater transparency to Federal spending in order to encourage and inform the debate over how taxpayers’ money is spent and what they get in return,” said Portman. “It is consistent with recent changes in the House Rules and Senate legislation which require similar disclosure for earmarks. It is also consistent with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 – the legislation Congress passed and the President supported that requires all Federal grants and contracts to be posted online by January 1, 2008.”

“This database houses more information on earmarks in one place than has ever been publicly available through the Federal government,” Portman added.

When the earmarks database was first launched on March 12, 2007, it provided aggregate data on the number and cost of earmarks for FY2005 appropriations, and was able to show this information by agency, office and account. Today’s update includes details on individual earmarks, the ability to view earmarks by State and a downloadable file so that the public can sort information in ways they find useful. However, the database is not designed, and cannot accurately be used, to identify the individual sponsors of congressional earmarks. Additionally, the recipient of an earmark identified in the database may not in all cases represent the ultimate beneficiary of the earmark.

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