



Bunning should ‘balk’ at earmarks, along with others

By Jim Waters

The Courier-Journal recently reported requests made for pork-barrel spending by Indiana and Kentucky U.S. senators — along with an explanation for why Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., dipped into the till.

Mark Hayes, Lugar’s spokesman, told C-J reporter James Carroll his boss doesn’t shy from the Porkapalooza because, [“This money is going to be spent anyway.”](#)

A shy Kentuckian, Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell, “declined comment for this story.”

A shocker? Perhaps not. After all, what comment could justify spending \$14.4 million of Vermont’s federal tax donation on a “consolidated fitness and rehabilitation center” at Fort Campbell?

No comment can justify a \$10-million request for a “chapel and multipurpose complex,” also at the fort.

What disappoints me is that Sen. Jim Bunning, R-Ky., apparently asked for \$14 million for the same project.

Bunning received kudos from me on many media outlets throughout the state for refusing to bow to Washington’s RINOs (Republicans In Name Only) by opposing both the Bush and Obama administration’s big-government intervention called “stimulus funding.” But now, the Hall of Fame pitcher-turned-senator tosses a curveball by asking for more earmarks in the fiscal 2010 budget than either Lugar or McConnell.

What “comment” could satisfy taxpayers when they learn that they must pay \$30 million for a writing project for teachers or \$10 million for a “Reach Out and Read” program when their taxes already cover nearly \$5 billion on education in the commonwealth?

Bunning won’t make the National Taxpayer Hall of Fame with such nonsense. A hall-of-famer stands out in the crowd, demonstrates great accomplishments and perseverance – and a better record than most.

Check your election game program. The GOP wants to put Bunning in the bullpen. He needs some fund-raising fastballs if he wants to stay in the starting rotation. A spending spree on the taxpayers’ dime isn’t the way to do it.

Meanwhile, his Senate batterymate, McConnell, wants \$49 million for two Kentucky universities – on top of hefty tuition increases in recent years for the same schools. Kentucky’s senior senator wants to extract millions more from taxpayers, just for two universities. How much would taxpayers lose if all universities got the same amount of earmark money?

Yes, senator, stick with “*no comment.*”

These excessive spending requests keep Republicans from criticizing – with credibility – the Obama administration’s wasteful use of tax dollars and egregious encroachment on our economic freedom. At one time it would have been unthinkable for Republican senators to seek more earmark spending than their Democratic counterparts. Not now – at least not for Kentucky and Indiana.

Only one of four U.S. senators representing both states did not request earmarks: Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind.

Partisan Republicans will whine about this column. But they won’t say much about these tax-supported earmarks coming at a time when Kentucky families lose jobs as quickly as Bunning can say, “Yes, I am running.”

After all, how many chapels do you know about that cost \$10 million?

Some huff and puff, and say: “Kentuckians deserve to get some of their tax money back from Washington.”

But “some” equals \$1.6 billion!

“We’ll get left behind other states,” they moan.

But if earmarks remain critical to keeping states from crashing, then Bayh – representing a larger state with a bigger economy – would pull out his Ameritax Express card and wear it out. Instead, his spokesman told Carroll that the federal government should tighten its belt and make “hard choices,” just like most American families.

Compare that with Lugar’s spokesman: “This money is going to be spent anyway.”

It’s a mantra similar to Kentucky’s lottery lingo: “Someone’s going to win, might as well be you.”

It’s taking the easy way out – and gambling with our economic future.

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