# Earmarks extraordinaire gets keys to the Treasury

By Jim Waters

All taxpayers want for Christmas from Uncle Santa, er, Sam, is to keep more of their hard-earned dollars and less wasteful spending of their money that ends up in the hands of the tax Grinches in Washington.

Instead, they get Rep. Hal Rogers, R-Ky., Somerset's "Prince of Pork" (the Lexington Herald-Leader's designation, not mine) as the House Appropriations Committee chair.

Bah humbug!

I can only conclude that soon-to-be Speaker of the House, Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, and his fellow GOP leaders (as in Gobs of Pork) had been drinking too much of that "special" eggnog when deciding to put the biggest earmark generator in Congress last year in charge of the Treasury. And then they claim he's a converted Republican In Name Only (RINO) and expect taxpayers to buy it.

Rogers has been bringing sleigh-loads full of pork worth billions back to his eastern Kentucky district for the 27 years he's been on the Appropriations Committee. LegisStorm LLC, a nonpartisan congressional watchdog, reported that Rogers secured 137 earmarks worth $252 million since 2008.

Ho, ho hold on there! That's a quarter-billion in just two years. And he doesn't show any remorse. Instead, Rogers lavishly spends to help his poor Eastern Kentucky district, he says.

Does anyone have *any* evidence that this taxpayer-backed Pork Fest has done anything to revive the economy in Mr. Rogers' 5th District Neighborhood or anywhere east of Lexington?

No, but it's done a lot to help *him.*

In November, he got re-elected for the 16th time. He rarely faces opposition. In a demonstration of sacrilege akin to replacing Santa with Scrooge, former Gov. Paul Patton took Daniel Boone's name off a parkway running through the district and put "Rogers" on it — a Porkway!

But please don't equate all of these "accomplishments" with Hal being taxpayers' pal.

"Hal Rogers has never been a friend of the taxpayer," said David Williams, vice president of policy for Citizens Against Government Waste, a spending watchdog in Washington, D.C.

Rogers swears he's a changed politician. He's going to put the federal budget on "Pork Watchers." He's gotten the message: The taxpayers are as mad as kids finding coal in their Christmas stockings, and they're not going to take it anymore.

The possibility of a politician changing from Citizens Against Government Waste's "Porker of the Month" in August to a lean, mean tax-saving machine by Christmas is about as likely as Saint Nick sucking down a Slim-Fast bar rather than the milk and cookies left near the chimney.

"Appropriators are hardwired to appropriate, much like retrievers are hardwired to catch rabbits and bring them back in their teeth," said Ross Baker, Rutgers University political science professor.

Rogers earned "Porker of the Month" after sponsoring a bill this year to give $5 million annually to conservation groups protecting cheetahs, lions and Ethiopian wolves in other countries. One group interested in applying for a chunk of this wild (spending) game is Allison Rogers, the congressman's daughter and grants administrator for the Namibia-based Cheetah Conservation Fund.

What a coincidence, hey!

And now you have a good ol' boy politician known as one of the "old bulls" in Congress in charge of spending most of the taxes you pay. Talk about an Ethiopian wolf in the hen house!

Rogers says he's changed. Yet, he told reporters about doing "a little jitterbug in the office" when he found out that his vigorous behind-the-scenes campaigning and fund raising earned him what he really wanted to become: Washington's Chief Stocking Stuffer.

That's why I didn't bother to ask for "an old reindeer that learns new tricks" on my Christmas list.

Not even Santa can do some things.

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