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“Earmarks ‘robust’ in \$1 trillion spending bill”
By Andrew M. Seaman

Earmarks ‘robust’ in \$1 trillion spending bill

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USA TODAY

A \$1.1 trillion spending bill laced with budget increases and more than 5,000 congressional pet projects passed the House on Thursday amid criticism from Republicans and watchdog groups.

The package — which combines six annual spending bills into one — includes \$447 billion in operating expenses, with an average increase of 10%, and more than \$600 billion for Medicare and Medicaid.

It was approved 221 to 202 and now moves to the Senate. No House Republicans voted for the bill, and 28 Democrats broke with their party to oppose it.

“At a time when we have record deficits, the American people are concerned about the deficits and the increasing debt, and yet I’ll guarantee you that we

found a million here and a million there to fund somebody’s little pork project in some state in America,” House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio said.

Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., called the bill “an opportunity to reverse years of neglect ... to our roads and bridges, neglect to our lower-income neighbors and friends, neglect to our education system, neglect to our veterans.”

Projects, known as earmarks, are inserted into annual budget bills at the request of members. Stephen Ellis of Taxpayers for Common Sense said his organization identified 5,224 earmarks in the bill worth about \$3.9 billion.

“They’ve given earmarks a haircut, a slight trim, but they are still there, and they are pretty robust,” Ellis said.

Among the earmarks:

► Democratic Sens. Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye, both of Hawaii, secured

\$3.15 million for a Financial Education and Pre-Home Ownership Counseling Pilot Program in Hawaii.

Jesse Broder Van Dyke, an Akaka spokesman, said program grants will help identify successful methods of financial education and counseling services, and establish program models for others to deliver those services.

► Rep. Dan Lungren, R-Calif., secured \$930,000 for maintaining exhibits at the Aerospace Museum of California in McClellan. “This is still part of the overall property that was essentially the Air Force base that was closed ... over a decade ago,” Lungren said. “So this is part of the continuing process of making that whole area viable.”

Lungren, who voted against the bill, said if all members gave up their earmarks he would do the same.

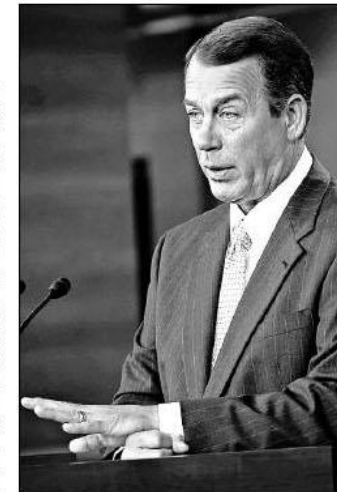
► Rep. Leonard Boswell, D-Iowa, se-

cured \$750,000 for the World Food Prize Foundation, which has undertaken a \$29.8 million project to convert a century-old library in Des Moines into the Norman E. Borlaug Hall of Laureates.

The federal money would go toward educational exhibits on Borlaug, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and his efforts to end world hunger, said Jane Slusark, a Boswell spokeswoman. “The World Food Prize’s Hall of Laureates will teach our children and grandchildren about the state’s deep rural roots and the great men and women who have contributed to feeding the world,” Boswell said.

Ellis said he is not taking issue with these specific earmarks. He added, however, “I am sure there are millions of dollars that have been wasted in this legislation on these parochial projects.”

Contributing: The Associated Press



By Alex Wong, Getty Images

Boehner: None of House minority leader’s fellow Republicans voted for bill.