

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



Craig L. Bosley, MD

Spending the people's money

October 19, 2009

"Government is like a baby: An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other."

— Ronald Reagan

Is it an appropriate use of taxpayer money to fund a "tattoo removal violence prevention program," a Sparta Teapot museum, a program to communicate with extra-terrestrials, the Pleasure Beach water taxi service, a Waterfree Urinal Conservation Initiative and a swine odor and manure management program? Moreover, where in the Constitution is the power for Congress to spend our money this way?

Is this the work of Congress? Is this the work of the Constitution? Is this the people's work? There is so much pork barrel spending that an organization, Citizens Against Government Waste, devotes a book to it, the "Congressional Pig Book." That's not a good sign.

Even worse, we have become so accustomed to and accepting of this waste that when President Obama promised to cut earmarks to \$7.8 billion a year, we applauded. Think about it. We accept wasting nearly \$8 billion a year as good news.

In 2009, Congress passed bills with 10,160 earmarks—10,160 ways they intentionally wasted our money by hiding it in other bills.

Fittingly, Vice President Biden summed up the government's

ignorance of money management when he said we have to spend money to keep from going bankrupt. A bit different from what I was taught; it never occurring to me the way to solve debt and loss of income was to keep spending money rather than scrimping, saving and paying off debt. It should bother us that our leaders make such ridiculous statements. But it should really terrify us that they actually believe what they are saying.

The 1996 Congress did try to do the people's work, passing a line-item veto bill, allowing the president to veto specific parts of a bill line by line. Maintaining our system of checks and balances, the bill allowed Congress 30 days to overturn the president's veto with a simple majority vote. Congress not only preserved the balance of power, it improved it.

Too good to be true? Absolutely. It ended up before the Supreme Court and was declared unconstitutional because it interfered with the constitutional powers of Congress. Have members of Congress and the Supreme Court become obstacles "we the people" have to overcome to return to the constitutionally limited government our founding fathers gave us?

The results of the Supreme Court supported quid pro quos and unending pork barrel spending? In 2008 Congress wasted \$17.2 billion, in 2009 \$19.6 billion and in 2010 it looks like it will waste

\$21.7 billion. In the five-year span from 1998 to 2003 earmarks rose 346 percent.

Does Congress even have time to do the people's work? It cannot. It has a full-time job dealing with the 10,160 earmarks each year, 40 earmarks voted into law every day, spending over \$75 million a day on them.

Check your savings account. Do you have \$75 million a day to share with the government because the government has no earned income; its only source of money is us. That is our \$75 million a day we allow them to take.

Harold Coffin of the San Francisco Examiner accurately summed up the values of government saying, "When George Washington threw the dollar across the Rappahannock River, he didn't realize he was establishing a precedent for government spending."

Whose blame? Whose fault? Ours. The voters. We vote them into office and then refuse to vote them out. Or, we are too busy or too unconcerned to vote at all, believing our vote cannot make a difference.

We can change it. We have the power each time we go into the voting booth or each time we decide not to vote. Our vote does make a difference, a huge difference. Our power. Our choice. Our vote. Our fault.