



POSITION PAPER

SINGLE ISSUE LEGISLATION

For those unfamiliar with how legislation is passed in Congress, here's a short example of how the process usually works. Let's use the House of Representatives as an example and say that Representative "A" comes up with a bill that solves the problem of providing free health care for poor children. It is a perfect solution that every member of Congress would certainly support, not to mention the good public relations value of passing such legislation before an upcoming election. Congressman "B" sees this bill as popular legislation that most representatives would have trouble voting against, so he attaches a rider to the bill that gives his state a multimillion dollar museum dedicated to stickball. For the same reason, Representative "C" attaches a rider that authorizes the construction of a dam that will cost several million dollars and will flood several thousand square miles of Native American tribal land. Representative "D" sees the bill as an opportunity to attach an amendment that allows illegal aliens to get free healthcare as well.

Now this almost perfect "Free Health Care for Poor Children" bill comes to the floor for a vote. Those representatives that vote for it look like real heroes! Those representatives who vote against it, mainly because of all the pork-barrel projects that are attached to the bill, look like the bad guys and will probably have trouble getting reelected and/or will be tarred with the brush of being anti-children. However, if the bill passes, all the "pork" added on to it also becomes law, so those funds are now allocated for the stickball museum, the destructive dam and illegal aliens would now be entitled to free healthcare.

The above is an over simplification, of course, but the example illustrates an important problem associated with passing legislation that currently exists in congress. Although this problem has been allowed to fester for many, many years, it is becoming ever more blatant and destructive. In 2006, Congress allocated a record \$71.77 billion to 15,832 special pork-barrel projects, more than double the \$29.11 billion spent on 4,155 pork-barrel projects in 1994.

It is also common practice for members of congress to be forced to vote for useless, disastrous and often overpriced “pork-barrel” projects because they are attached to "must pass" Budget Bills! It is a well know fact that Budget Bills, especially the end of the year emergency bills, collect riders like rotting fruit collects flies. If a member of congress can manage to stick a pork-barrel project onto an end of the year Budget Bill, it is almost certain to be approved, because the budget *must* be passed!

The best way to solve this problem is to pass legislation that requires:

All bills and legislation to be single purposed. An individual bill should address one specific issue and only that issue. Any amendments must directly address that specific issue. *No pork, no side issues, and especially, no riders*. All bills must be published and the discussions open to public scrutiny. All votes to be by roll call so the constituents will know who supported or opposed what bills.

Limiting legislation to a single purpose will make bills more concise, and will eliminate the custom of putting expensive pork-barrel or special interest giveaways in so called "must pass" legislation. Any legislation should be single issue, debated as such and voted upon as such. If members of congress want to fund projects back in their home states, then let them introduce bills for these projects and let them be openly debated and voted on. Members of Congress should not be allowed to hide these pork-barrel projects in unrelated legislation and appropriations bills.

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