



# AMERICANS for TAX REFORM

Grover G. Norquist  
President

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The Honorable John Cornyn  
United States Senate  
517 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-4304

Dear Senator Cornyn,

Congratulations on your sponsorship of S. 2852, the Federal Spending and Taxpayer Accessibility Act of 2008, which I encourage members of Congress to support.

Congress and President Bush took an important step towards greater fiscal accountability in passing the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, and the result of this legislation, the website [www.USAspending.gov](http://www.USAspending.gov), now provides taxpayers with a first glimpse at how the federal government spends their hard-earned tax dollars, specifically relating to federal grants and contracts.

Your legislation would complement and enhance the website [www.USAspending.gov](http://www.USAspending.gov) by incorporating detailed information on agency outlays by obligation and object class, as well as budget function, which taxpayers will appreciate. The elimination of the threshold for disclosure, currently set at \$25,000, would make this component even more meaningful.

Beyond strengthening [www.USAspending.gov](http://www.USAspending.gov), the bill would also provide for meaningful transparency relating to earmarks and federal income tax liabilities.

S. 2852 requires that the Secretary of the Treasury provide taxpayers with a "Taxpayer Account Statement", a statement provided to taxpayers that would give them a concise overview of the amount of federal income taxes paid by the individual similar to the "Social Security Account Statements" the Social Security Administration already mails out. This account statement will give taxpayers a much clearer picture of their tax burden.

The bill would also address the opaque and controversial earmark process taxpayers have long criticized. Sec. 3 of S. 2852 would direct the Congressional Research Service (CRS) to create a website that will allow taxpayers to track earmarks by recipient, appropriations bill, state and member of Congress, as well as to aggregate the amount of earmarks sponsored and requested by each member.

One potential area of concern in this section is Sec. 3(b)(1)(B), which defines a type of earmark called a "limited tax benefit." Earmarks are a spending problem, not a tax problem. Any focus away from spending is problematic. Also, the definition of a "limited tax benefit" is very broad. The "limited group" could be any number of taxpayers (even millions of taxpayers). "Eligibility criteria...not uniform in application" could be read to apply to virtually any current tax provision, which differs in application for every taxpayer. While I understand the intent, the language may create an unintended consequence of equating tax cuts with wasteful government spending.

On behalf of Americans for Tax Reform and millions of American taxpayers I thank you for your leadership and hope that members of Congress will join you in your commendable efforts to increase transparency and accountability in government finances.

Onward,

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