

Earmarks popular among new House members

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Forty-two of the 54 new members of the U.S. House of Representatives say they want earmarked funds for personal pet projects.

The freshman lawmakers announced their intent to seek the federal funds on their Web sites as per regulations, USA Today said Thursday.

Taxpayers for Common Sense official Steve Ellis said the use of earmarks in broader congressional spending bills is commonplace in Washington politics.

"The erroneous but common wisdom in Washington is that you need to play the earmark game," Ellis said. "To get along, everybody goes along, and so everyone gets co-opted into this process."

The Common Sense group said at least six freshman House members haven't sought any earmarks, which tend to be focused on road and sewer repairs in House members' districts.

Jeff Ostermayer, who serves as spokesman for U.S. Rep. Thomas Rooney, told USA Today the Florida Republican may be seeking \$144 million for district projects but all have previously earned congressional approval.

"We have to be fiscally responsible," Ostermayer said of Rooney's earmarks. "We believe these projects need to be vetted through the process. Given the current economic situation, we can't be wasteful."

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