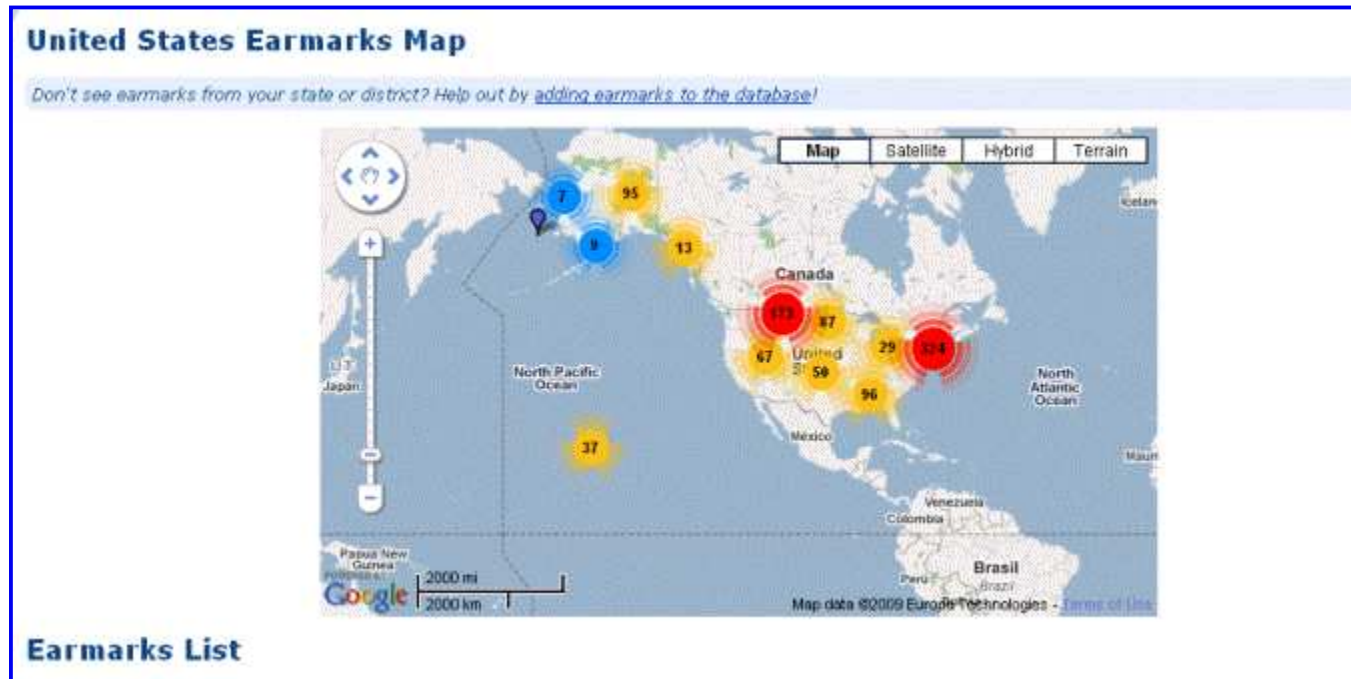


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# Report Federal Pork, Win A Kindle

By Ryan Singel [✉](#) July 22, 2009 | 10:06 am | Categories: [Crowdsourcing](#)



In D.C., they call them earmarks. Lawmakers stick small provisions in funding bills to funnel money to projects in their district, a way to bring home the bacon and grease their way to re-election. Think of Alaska's bridge to nowhere, courtesy of former Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens (R), or the more than \$166 million that Rep. Jack Murtha (D-Pa) [stuffed in 2008's defense bill](#) (.pdf).

Earmarks have long been hard to track since they are buried deep in appropriation bills that are hundreds of pages long. A single bill can have more than 2,000 earmarks. Due to recent reforms Members of Congress now have to report their earmark requests, though not in any easy-to-find format.

Enter WashingtonWatch.com, a website that tracks the costs and savings of federal bills, which is fighting pork with pork.

The watchdog service is giving away an Amazon Kindle and an iPod Shuffle to the citizens who identify and upload the most earmarks to its interactive map of [Congressional giveaways](#). Third place gets a fruitcake. (Sounds a little [Glengarry Glen Ross](#), but whatever).

The point of this crowdsourcing exercise is to shed light on the earmarking practice, to encourage good governance and let others use the database to build other apps.

The site is a side project of longtime government-transparency advocate Jim Harper who works at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute. The [earmarks contest](#) is funded in part by the [Sunlight Foundation](#).

Harper says he runs the site because it's "fun to teach ordinary Americans about government and watch them become engaged." Plus, "Transparency is a matter of pan-ideological agreement, which makes it fun."

The contest ends when every lawmakers' requests are in the database or the end of the fiscal year for the feds (October 1) - whichever comes first.

Citizens, start your pork reporters!

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