



## **CI political scientists challenge beliefs about Congressional earmarks in new book**

Camarillo, Calif., Sept. 22, 2010 - In recent years, special congressional appropriations known as 'earmarks' have become synonymous with wasteful government spending and corruption. Andy Roth, a vice president at the Club for Growth, claims that "Earmarking is a corrupt practice, plain and simple."

"Hold on" say two CSU Channel Islands (CI) Professors of Political Science. Scott Frisch and Sean Kelly's new book *Cheese Factories on the Moon: Why Earmarks are Good for American Democracy*, was released this week by Paradigm Publishers (Boulder, CO).

The founders of the American republic, in the Constitution, invested the power of the purse in the U.S. Congress to ensure that spending would reflect the priorities of the public. Earmarks allow constituents, through their representatives, to influence the federal government making it responsive to the demands of local interests; they allow members of Congress to adapt 'one-size-fits-all' national programs to local conditions. "Ultimately it is up to voters to hold members accountable for their earmarks; if they think the earmarks don't serve the interests of the district they can defeat their member of Congress in the next election" says Kelly.

The founders also believed that bestowing the power of the purse on the Congress would allow the legislature to check the power of the executive branch. "People arguing for the end of earmarks are saying, 'Let's give all the authority to a centralized executive branch,'" Frisch says. "The centralized funding of government programs&hellip;I think the Soviet Union tried that without great result." Removing the power to earmark funds from Congress would push all decisions about spending money into the deepest, darkest recesses of the bureaucracy and into the hands of bureaucrats who cannot be held accountable through democratic means.

A highly-readable book, Frisch and Kelly use well developed case-studies to illustrate how earmarks address local concerns, and how earmarks have been used to promote projects with profound national consequences like the Human Genome Project, and the Predator Drone, which is used widely in the war on terror. They also demonstrate how centralizing the power to spend in the executive branch has led to the misuse of power by a handful of bureaucrats.

Capitalizing on dozens of interviews with members and former members of Congress, congressional staff, lobbyists, and other Washington insiders, Frisch and Kelly weave a lively and interesting narrative that illuminates the earmark process, and details the role

lobbyists play in helping the public to exercise their First Amendment right to "petition government for the redress of grievances" by pursuing earmarks. And they are critical of the superficial and often highly biased treatment of earmarks in the media.

"We think this book is a serious challenge to the dominant narrative, the conventional wisdom, that earmarks are somehow an illegitimate exercise of congressional power, and are necessarily corrupt," says Kelly.

Norm Ornstein, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute says that *Cheese Factories* is successful in "demolishing the easy rhetoric and demagoguery on earmarks that are employed regularly by politicians and editorial writers across the country." And Les Francis, Senior Strategist at the Washington Media Group, says "This book, like their previous work... should be must reading for students and instructors of political science for sure, but it would help a lot of pundits, too-if they'd just quit talking long enough to read it!"

## **Author Biographies**

Scott A. Frisch is Professor of Political Science at California State University Channel Islands. He was a Presidential Management Fellow in the Department of Treasury between 1988 and 1990 with rotations in the Office of Management and Budget and the office of Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). A graduate of Lafayette College Frisch holds a Masters in Government Administration from the University of Pennsylvania and earned his PhD from the Claremont Graduate University.

Sean Q. Kelly is Professor of Political Science at California State University Channel Islands. As an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow (1993-1994) he worked for the Senate Democratic Leadership in the Democratic Policy Committee-then under co-chairs George Mitchell (ME) and Tom Daschle (SD)-as a health policy analyst.

A graduate of Seattle University Kelly earned his PhD from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Long-time collaborators Frisch and Kelly are coauthors of several scholarly articles and three books *Committee Assignment Politics in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2006), *Jimmy Carter and the Water Wars: Presidential Influence and the Politics of Pork* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press 2008), and *Cheese Factories on the Moon: Why Earmarks are Good for American Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers).

Web site: <http://www.cheesefactoriesonthemoon.com>

Blog site: <http://cheesefactoriesonthemoon.blogspot.com>

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