

Faithful Citizenship



April 6, 2008

Did you ever notice how things don't seem so bad when they're working to your benefit? That's the entire scheme behind "pork barrel" or "earmark" projects which we've been hearing a lot about in this campaign. What happens is that a legislator introduces a bill. If he/she doesn't have the support needed to pass the bill on its own merits, the bargaining begins. As he approaches his colleagues for their support, they agree to vote in favor of passage if he will include certain special projects that will very likely win them favor back in their own district. Hawaii Senator Inouye is the most successful at accomplishing this. Again this year, he is a recipient of the Golden Fleece Award.

The Golden Fleece Award was begun by Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire and was awarded every month between March 1975 and December 1988. It was revived as an annual award in 2000. In Proxmire's words, it was meant to single out a "wasteful, ridiculous or ironic use of the taxpayers' money." How crazy does this spending get? Some of the awards given so far were for such things as:

- 1) The Office of Education for spending \$219,592 to develop a curriculum to teach college students how to watch television.
- 2) The National Endowment for the Humanities for a \$25,000 grant to study why people cheat, lie and act rudely on Virginia tennis courts.
- 3) Giving the C & C of Honolulu \$28,000 to study how they could spend another \$250,000 for a good surfing beach.
- 4) A \$27,000 study to determine why inmates want to escape from prison.

Sen. McCain has never asked for such special funding in his entire legislative career. Sen. Obama and Sen. Clinton have both accepted this as common practice. You decide.

Gotta go boot up my hard drive. Aloha - Mary B.