

Biden and Carper earn kudos for releasing their federal earmark projects (The News Journal)

Here's a nod of recognition to Delaware's Sen. Joe Biden and Sen. Tom Carper. We asked them earlier to make public their "wish list" of special federal monies for state projects and they now have done so.

Thank you.

The senators follow the actions of Rep. Mike Castle, who made his special budget requests, or earmarks, public in March.

This is a change of practice for the Delaware delegation. The members previously kept their requests quiet until they were authorized.

Sen. Biden has requested \$342 million for a variety of Delaware-based projects while Sen. Carper asked for \$349 million. About \$328 million of the requests overlap. Rep. Castle earlier requested about \$200 million in special funding.

The requests range from help for the University of Delaware to test the feasibility of ocean-based wind power to money for the Ministry of Caring to rehabilitate a shelter for homeless women. The requests are on each delegation member's website.

One doesn't have to approve of all or any of the special requests to appreciate the change in policy. These special requests have been abused by a number of members of Congress. No abuses were connected to the Delaware delegation, but the infamous "bridge to nowhere" in Alaska serves as a reminder of what could go wrong. The problem was their secrecy.

How could the public judge whether the senators' or representative's requests were legitimate if they were made and processed in the dark?

By putting them out in the open, the public can at least judge whether the individual member is serving his or her constituents. At the same time, by knowing that the public will see the request, organizations may think twice before asking for a grant that doesn't truly serve the public.

In a perfect world, the various organizations served by these requests wouldn't need them. But they do. And the requests can do some good for the taxpayers.