

James Clyburn:

PAY-TO-PLAY POLITICS

Summary:

James Clyburn has leveraged his earmarking powers to help his donors in a systematic way.



KING OF SCHEMES

Clyburn devised more schemes than any other South Carolina Representative and was one of the top earmarkers in Congress.¹

According to his own press releases, Clyburn earmarked over \$200 million over half a dozen years.² He even secured funds for projects outside of his district.

Many of Clyburn's earmarks are particularly concerning because they lacked the support of any other members of Congress. In fact, Clyburn was the sole sponsor of more earmarks than any other South Carolina representative. Furthermore, the total cost of his sole-sponsor earmarks nearly matched the combined total cost of all sole-sponsor earmarks of all the other members of the South Carolina Congressional delegation.³

Golf over Guns

Clyburn loves golf and sees no problem with wasting millions of defense dollars to support the game. In 2008, he earmarked \$3 million dollars for The First Tee, a program that teaches children to play golf. It is unclear why taxpayer money should be used to support this program when it enjoys plenty of corporate support. Interestingly enough,

before Clyburn made the request, the center had renamed itself the "James E. Clyburn Golf Center", and had erected a statue in his honor (pictured at right). Demonstrating questionable judgment, Clyburn claimed to be "very, very proud" of his earmark request.⁴

Influence Peddlers Love the Assistant Leader

Even while the Democrats were in the House minority, Clyburn received a lot of lobbyist support. What makes this even more remarkable is that he represents an entirely safe, minority-majority district. According to Public Citizen, he received more direct campaign contributions from lobbyists than two-thirds of the House membership for the years 1998-2006.⁵

SCANA Corporation, the parent company of South Carolina Electric and Gas Company, is one of his biggest contributors. The SCANA Corporation Federal PAC maxed out to both of Clyburn's PACs in 2010, making him one of the company's largest beneficiaries. SCANA also donated to his scholarship fund.

AT LEFT: JAMES E. CLYBURN GOLF CENTER

A golf-training center in Columbia, South Carolina renamed its building and erected a statue to honor Jim Clyburn. Afterward, Clyburn requested and received a \$3 million earmark for a program hosted by the center.

CLYBURN'S COLLEGES



Colleges Receiving Clyburn's Earmarks

Earmark receipts from top to bottom:

Claflin University -- \$5.7 Million.

University of South Carolina -- \$3.7 Million.

Florence-Darlington Technical College -- \$2 Million.

Clyburn's daughter, Mignon Clyburn, regulated the company while serving on the state utility commission. As a stockowner, the elder Clyburn has a financial interest in SCANA Corporation, which owns a nuclear power plant. Not surprisingly, Clyburn supports nuclear power.⁶

The lobbying firm, Podesta Group, was Clyburn's fifth-largest contributor during the last election cycle. The Podesta Group has hired three of his former staffers: Paul Brathwaite in 2007, Jaime Harrison in 2008, and Aranthan Jones in 2009.⁷

Big Education Loves Clyburn

Clyburn has steered tens of millions of dollars to colleges and universities. At the same time, he and his scholarship fund have received over \$80,000 from the lobbyists and presidents of these colleges and universities.⁸

Honors for Earmarks?

Clyburn has accepted a number of honorary degrees from the colleges for which he has earmarked funds. In addition, his wife has received an honorary degree from one of these schools. Posthumously, Clyburn's father also received an honorary degree from one of the same schools.⁹

Enjoys Free Vacations from Influence Peddlers

Including the Abramoff junket, Clyburn has taken over \$190,000 in privately-funded junkets. Over the past 12 years, Clyburn has accepted over 90 trips. Some of these trips were paid for by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, AT&T, the AFL-CIO, McDonald's, the Association of American Railroads, BNSF Railway, Lowe's, National Cable and Telecommunications Association, the Nuclear Energy Institute, and South Carolina State University.¹⁰

Clyburn's Charity

The left howled when Tom DeLay raised money for his non-profits; Clyburn does the same thing raising funds for his scholarship foundation.

Unsurprisingly, contributions to Clyburn's charity skyrocketed as he rose in the Democrat hierarchy and the Democrats seized control of Congress. His foundation uses the same fundraising company that Clyburn's leadership PAC uses.



Massive Earmark Spender

According to his own press releases, Clyburn earmarked about \$210 million over several years.

According to the U.S. House Clerk's lobbying contributions database, Clyburn's scholarship fund has received over \$1.4 Million from organizations that lobby Congress.¹¹

He's raised at least \$1.7 million for his endowment at his alma mater, with large sums coming from several organizations that lobby Congress.¹²

Helping Family and Friends Get By

From examining his record, it's clear that it pays to be close to Clyburn. According to one newspaper's tally in 2008, Clyburn had earmarked at least \$6.2 million that could directly benefit his relatives and friends.¹³

Congressman Clyburn's cousin, William Clyburn Jr., was paid \$60,000 to lobby for a Georgia airport. The lobbyist claimed that he secured over \$2 million for the Augusta airport after talking to his Congressional cousin.¹⁴

INVOLVED WITH ABRAMOFF

Clyburn was involved in the Jack Abramoff scandal.

Contrary to House rules, Abramoff paid \$5,000 for Clyburn's travel.

Furthermore, Clyburn filed inaccurate reports stating that a nonprofit organization had paid for his travel.¹⁵

EXAMPLES OF CLYBURN'S EARMARKS

- Clyburn's cousin, William Clyburn Jr., is a lobbyist for the City of Charleston. William received over \$160,000 for lobbying on Charleston's behalf between 2006 and 2009. William has given his cousin \$3,250. Between 2008 and 2010, Charleston received over \$2.1 million in earmarks. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of these 4 earmarks.¹⁶
- Lobbyist Greg Gill gave \$10,900 to Clyburn; his client, Claflin University, received earmarks of over \$5.7 million. The college president, Henry Tisdale, has given an additional \$4,500 to Clyburn. Other university officials have also given to Clyburn. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of 2 of the 4 earmarks. Clyburn received an honorary degree from Claflin.¹⁷
- Clyburn's former staffer, Jaime Harrison, lobbied for the University of South Carolina and gave \$5,400 to Clyburn. Steven Beckham, another USC lobbyist made political contributions to Clyburn of \$5,750. Beckham gave an additional \$3,000 to Clyburn's scholarship fund. Joel Smith, former dean of USC's Business School, gave \$2,000 to Clyburn. USC has received over \$3.7 million in earmarks from Clyburn. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of these four earmarks. Clyburn received an honorary degree from USC.¹⁸
- The president of Benedict College, David Swinton, gave \$4,700 to Clyburn, and his college received a \$2 million earmark. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of this earmark. Clyburn received an honorary degree from Benedict College.¹⁹
- Lobbyist Van Hipp gave \$4,250 to Clyburn. His client, Florence-Darlington Technical College received a \$2 million earmark. The college president, Charles Gould, gave \$250. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of this earmark.²⁰
- John Hilbert, a lobbyist, gave \$3,250 to Clyburn and his client, DefenseCS Inc., received a \$2 million earmark. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of this earmark.²¹
- Connie Jameson, a lobbyist for Palmetto Health Foundation, gave \$7,500 to Clyburn. Palmetto Health received over \$1.3 million in earmarks. Butler Derrick, a former South Carolina Democrat Congressman and lobbyist for Palmetto Health, also gave \$2,000 to Clyburn. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of one of these two earmarks.²²
- Connie Jameson and Butler Derrick also lobbied for Orangeburg County, South Carolina. Orangeburg County received a \$95,000 highway interchange earmark.²³
- Lee Monroe, the president of Voorhees College, gave \$4,100 to Clyburn and his college received earmarks worth over \$1.2 million. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of these four earmarks. Clyburn received an honorary degree from Voorhees.²⁴
- William Gray and Justin Gray, lobbyists for Morris College, gave \$6,500 to Clyburn. Morris College received earmarks of over \$1.1 million. College President Luns Richardson also gave Clyburn \$2,000. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of two of the three earmarks. Clyburn received an honorary degree from Morris College. In addition, Clyburn's father received a posthumous honorary degree from Morris.²⁵
- Linda Lingle, a lobbyist for Trident Technical College, gave Clyburn \$7,450, and Trident received two earmarks for nearly \$700,000. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of one of the two earmarks.²⁶
- Barbara McCall, a lobbyist for Sumter, South Carolina gave \$2,500 to Clyburn. Sumter received two earmarks for over \$400,000. Clyburn was the only known sponsor for one of these two earmarks.²⁷
- Kyle Michel, a lobbyist, has given over \$2500 to Clyburn. Michel also gave \$3,000 to Clyburn's scholarship fund and \$500 to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in Clyburn's honor. One of his clients, Engenuity SC, received an earmark worth nearly \$300,000. Clyburn was the only known sponsor of this earmark.²⁸ Welvista, another client of Kyle Michel, received over \$270,000.²⁹

An earmark to build a community center appears to have helped two of Clyburn's relatives: Clyburn's architect nephew and Clyburn's lobbyist brother Charles. The community center was never built, but it appears that Clyburn's nephew's firm badly needed the work.³⁰

Lobbyist Jaime Harrison was a senior staffer for Clyburn. Harrison previously served as the Chief Operating Officer of College Summit and now serves on its board.³¹ College Summit has received three earmarks and \$510,000 from Clyburn.³² In addition, Clyburn earmarked \$150,000 for the Historic Columbia Foundation, where Clyburn staffer Robert Nance serves on the executive committee.³³ Clyburn was the only known sponsor of this earmark.³⁴

Clyburn's Corrupt Crony

Clyburn partnered with a corrupt bureaucrat, Benedict Shogaolu, who subsequently went to prison for four counts of

public corruption.³⁵ In spite of federal law, Clyburn failed to publicly disclose both his business partnership with Shogaolu and the business's nearly \$2 million worth of loans.³⁶ With his modest means, it's hard to believe that his non-disclosure was a mere oversight. He also earmarked \$1.3 million for the Horry County transit agency where Shogaolu served as executive director.³⁷

Clyburn's College

Clyburn steered tax dollars to South Carolina State University without requiring any accountability even though his alma mater has been mired in financial scandal for years. SCSU has been investigated three times by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division over the past several years.³⁸

SCSU received over \$40 million from the federal government for the James E. Clyburn University Transportation Center. Clyburn intends to house his official papers at the \$100

million center. Situated on 33 acres, the 475,000 square foot center would also include a hotel and conference center.³⁹ Both Clyburn and his wife have received honorary degrees from SCSU.

Unsurprisingly, money has gone missing. Clyburn doesn't know where the missing money went even though his staffer, Robert Nance, serves on the board of the school.⁴⁰ Given the university's problems over the years—and his close association with it—it's hard to believe that Clyburn wasn't aware of the problems.

Current and former university officials either don't know or refuse to say how tax dollars were spent.⁴¹

Benedict Shogaolu, Clyburn's corrupt business partner, served on the executive committee of Clyburn's transportation center.⁴² Perhaps he knows where some of the missing money went.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT THIS?

Contact Congressman Clyburn's Office Today!

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The U.S. Department of Transportation cut off funding, and a federal audit was unable to determine how tax dollars had been spent.⁴³ Like federal auditors, a local paper had difficulty making sense of SCSU's finances. Records were disorganized and difficult to track down.⁴⁴ Clyburn's transportation center was also investigated by the state Legislative Audit Council.⁴⁵

Thirteen years after receiving the initial money, the center has still not been completed.⁴⁶ Of 33 colleges awarded transportation research facilities in 1998, only SCSU has failed to complete construction of its facility.⁴⁷ After spending millions of dollars, the center lost its designation as a federal University Transportation Center and no transportation research is occurring.⁴⁸

While receiving millions from federal taxpayers, SCSU failed to meet accreditation standards.⁴⁹ Undeterred, Clyburn continued to pursue funding for his alma mater.

Despite all these problems, Clyburn takes no blame for the debacle. "My office, my staff, nobody has anything to do with it," Clyburn said. "The relationship is between the federal agency and the requesting agency."⁵⁰

While it's clear that Clyburn's alma mater wants to build a monument in his honor, it is unclear what exactly the building will be used for. It may be used as a bus garage for the local transit authority, but the university has refused to further discuss its plans.⁵¹

Clyburn Hired a Convicted Criminal

Clyburn hired a corrupt politician and felon, John Rickenbacker, to represent him in his district shortly after Rickenbacker left prison. Rickenbacker had been found guilty of bribery and extortion.⁵²

While serving as a county chairman, this current Clyburn staffer solicited and accepted bribes in exchange for helping a company buy or lease a public hospital.⁵³

It seems odd that Clyburn would put a convicted felon back into a position of public trust so soon after he had violated the public trust.

Chaired Pelosi's "Clean House" Task Force

In spite of his nepotism and cronyism, Nancy Pelosi chose Clyburn to serve as

FEDERAL COVER-UP?

The Federal Highway Administration refuses to publicly release a report on the millions of dollars that are missing from the Clyburn University Transportation Center at SCSU. Clyburn refuses to lift a finger to try to get the feds to change their minds.⁵⁴

chairman of her Clean House Task Force in 2006. In his press release, Clyburn railed against the "pay to play" system that has treated him so well.

"We are witnessing a breakdown in our Democracy because of the undue influence of money. When money rules, the people are not heard and Democracy does not work. We cannot aspire to greatness when many of our government leaders require a 'pay to play' system for their services. Americans deserve better."⁵⁵

Interestingly, Clyburn has deleted this press release from his official website, even though he still has plenty of contemporaneous press releases posted.⁵⁶

UNAPOLOGETIC

After being caught for requesting earmarks that benefit his family, Clyburn was anything but apologetic. His excuse was that he has "a bushel of family members."⁵⁷ He would not even promise to be more careful in the future.

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