

is still more to be done, and I will work with the Congress to improve upon this legislation.

For example, the bill holds Members of the Senate and Executive Branch employees to a much higher standard of conduct than Members of the House. The specific bill language is confusing, and I believe these increased restrictions would have a negative impact on recruitment and retention of Federal employees. I urge the Congress to make these standards more uniform and less confusing and to do so in a way that will not discourage public service.

In addition, this bill would have the effect of unreasonably burdening sitting President's and Vice President's reelection campaigns. I look forward to working with Congress to amend these provisions to provide a reasonable process for allocating the cost of Presidential and Vice Presidential campaign travel that is consistent with security needs.

I am pleased that the Congress has begun to make progress in bringing greater transparency to the earmarking process. However, this bill falls far short of the reform that American taxpayers deserve. I am concerned that there are potential loopholes in some of the earmark reforms included in this bill that would allow earmarks to escape sufficient scrutiny. This legislation also does not address other earmark reforms I have called on Congress to implement, such as ending the practice of putting earmarks in report language.

I thank members of both parties who worked on this legislation and look forward to working with the Congress to further advance ethics, lobbying, and earmark reform.

NOTE: S. 1, approved September 14, was assigned Public Law 110–81.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Benchmark
Assessment Report**
September 14, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the

“Act”), attached is a report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

The second of two reports submitted consistent with the Act, it has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense; the Commander, Multi-National Force—Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander, United States Central Command.

George W. Bush

The White House,
September 14, 2007.

**Digest of Other
White House Announcements**

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

September 8

In the morning, at the InterContinental Sydney in Sydney, Australia, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Club InterContinental Lounge of the InterContinental Sydney, he had a working breakfast with Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Sydney Opera House, where, in the Concert Hall Southern Foyer, he participated in an official welcome with Prime Minister Howard. Then, in the Utzon Room, he participated in the APEC Leaders Dialogue with the APEC Business Advisory Council.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with APEC leaders. Then, at the Guillaume at Bennelong Restaurant, he had lunch with APEC leaders. Later, he participated in the APEC Leaders official photograph.

Later in the afternoon, in The Studio, the President participated in APEC Leaders Retreat I.