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LARRY CRAIG

NEWS RELEASE

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‘ETHICS REFORM’ FALLS SHORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig made the following statement on H.R. 1, the “Ethics Reform bill:”

“The legislation we voted on today is labeled as an ethics and lobbying reform measure. Unfortunately, legislative labels don’t guarantee performance. Just calling a bill ‘reform’ doesn’t guarantee it will improve the transparency of legislative operations so that the American people can better see what Congress is doing and hold its representatives accountable for their actions.

“In this case, I am troubled by the bill we are being asked to support today – a bill prepared without input from Republicans and outside the normal bipartisan, consensus-building legislative procedures of the Congress.

“While it contains a number of worthwhile provisions, I cannot agree that it makes the kind of fundamental improvements that its label promises in a number of critical areas.

“For example, there has been significant focus on how this bill would change Senate rules concerning ‘earmarks’ – that is, Congressionally-directed funding. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I have been asked about earmarks and have talked frankly with my Idaho constituents and others about this practice. I don’t believe in secret earmarks and in fact, on my website I have published a list of all the earmarks I have secured in appropriations legislation since I have been a member of the committee, so that anybody can review them.

“In my opinion, the so-called ‘earmark reforms’ in this bill are more likely to result in misleading people and gaming the process, rather than opening it up to public scrutiny. There is more to the bill than its earmark provisions – there are other flawed provisions as well as worthwhile provisions. It is not unusual for us to be asked to vote on a package including both provisions we agree with and those we don’t. Sometimes we overlook the bad, if the package on balance does more good than harm.

“But it would be perverse indeed for me to sanction, with my vote, a measure that I believe will frustrate the very goal of ethics reform that it is supposed to accomplish. I cannot pretend that the earmark provisions or other flaws in this bill are unimportant. I cannot ignore the real harm that some provisions of this bill will likely do. For these reasons, I cannot support this legislation.”