

March 21, 2005      Last week Congress spent another \$82 billion in an “emergency” supplemental appropriations bill. There is no emergency, however: Congress simply exceeded its fiscal year budget once again and needs more money. The 13 standard appropriations bills, which provide about \$2.4 trillion to run the federal government in 2005, are not enough to satisfy the ravenous spending appetites of Congress and the administration. Hence the so-called emergency supplemental bill, which cravenly combines troop funding with useless foreign aid and domestic pork. Supplemental spending bills are particularly galling because “emergency” funds are not subject to the same congressional budget rules. This allows Congress to spend billions of dollars completely outside the stated budget, with little or no public attention. It also underscores how meaningless government budgets really are-- unlike families and businesses, the political class never has to worry about busting the budget. Remember the optimistic claims about how the Iraq war would pay for itself? The liberated Iraqis would exploit the country’s oil resources and gratefully write a check to Uncle Sam, so the story went. Yet we don’t hear much about repayment from the Iraqis these days. American taxpayers already have spent over \$200 billion in Iraq, and now Congress is digging us deeper into debt with the supplemental bill. Worse yet, much of the supplemental spending is exceedingly wasteful foreign aid. Consider some of these expenditures of your tax dollars: -\$656 million for tsunami relief. As I’ve written before, Americans have sent hundreds of millions of dollars in private donations to tsunami victims. Why should we be taxed further? Why is flooding in Sri Lanka or Thailand more important than flooding in Wharton, Victoria, or Galveston, Texas? -\$94 million for Sudan, another candidate for charity rather than government aid; -\$582 million to build a new American embassy in Iraq, an outrageous sum considering that entire luxury resorts are built for less than \$500 million; -\$76 million to build a new airport in Kuwait, one of the wealthiest countries on earth; -Over \$500 million to address the drug trade in Afghanistan, despite clear evidence that the production of opium has grown exponentially since America began pouring billions of tax dollars into that country in 2001; -\$200 million in economic aid for the Palestinians; -\$150 million for Pakistan, which is run by an unelected dictator; -\$34 million for Ukraine, where the U.S. already intervened in last year’s elections using your tax dollars. Ukraine recently repaid our generosity by dumping the U.S. dollar and adopting an exchange rate that includes the Euro. Finally, the emergency supplemental bill enables the District of Columbia to use taxpayer funds to build a new baseball stadium. This is perhaps the greatest insult of all in a bill that amounts to extortion cloaked in patriotic “support the troops” rhetoric.