

Hutchison promises chamber leaders she'll request earmarks for Trinity River projects in Dallas and Fort Worth

07:46 AM CDT on Thursday, April 22, 2010

By TOM BENNING / The Dallas Morning News
tbenning@dallasnews.com

WASHINGTON – Sen. [Kay Bailey Hutchison](#) promised Wednesday to secure federal funds for the Trinity River projects in Dallas and [Fort Worth](#) and to see the massive redevelopments through to completion.

"Nothing great ever happens easily. This is not easy," she said. "But it is so important to the development of our two cities that I'm not at all giving up."

Both Trinity projects rely heavily on earmarks, and Hutchison told business leaders from the Dallas Regional Chamber and the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce that she will use earmarks, among other methods, to ensure both projects receive the money they need.

"I am absolutely not walking away from earmarks," she said at a luncheon at the Capitol.

Hutchison has never had any qualms about requesting earmarks, which are projects inserted into bills by lawmakers without the normal legislative process.

Her support could be particularly important for the Fort Worth plan because that district's representative, [Kay Granger](#), has signed on to House Republicans' one-year ban of earmarks.

Hutchison, a [Republican](#), reiterated her belief Wednesday that earmarks are a critical way to return taxpayer dollars to Texas.

"The question is who makes the decisions on how the money is spent," Hutchison said. "I'm better able to help the Trinity River than someone in the Department of Energy or the Corps of Engineers, who may not know these issues as well."

The senator's enthusiasm for federal pork comes as lawmakers and watchdog groups are increasing their scrutiny of earmarks.

Hutchison felt that wrath firsthand in March's gubernatorial primary, where Gov. [Rick Perry](#) used the earmark issue to label Hutchison a "big spender."

The presidents of both the Dallas and Fort Worth chambers praised Hutchison for her persistence in gathering federal funds for local projects.

"You can get lost in the bureaucracy of Washington," said Jim Oberwetter, president of the Dallas Regional Chamber.

"The reason you have representatives here is so they can represent you into the administration and the bureaucracy, so you don't get left out."