

WASHINGTON - House Republicans said Thursday they won't be bringing any pork home to their districts this year because the nation simply can't afford it.

And Orange County's GOP lawmakers are fine with that.

"We are in the middle of a huge financial crisis that threatens the well-being of not only future generations, but all of us right now," said Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Huntington Beach. "The Republicans have sent a signal now that it's not going to be business as usual. And if we get to be a majority there will be dramatic reform."

Rohrabacher's 2009 earmarks totaled \$2.9 million.

"Republicans took an important step toward showing the American people we're serious about reform by adopting an immediate, unilateral ban on all earmarks," Republican Leader Rep. John Boehner of Ohio said after his caucus agreed in a voice vote to suspend all earmark requests for this year.

"But the more difficult battle lies ahead, and that's stopping the spending spree in Washington that is saddling our children and grandchildren with trillions of dollars in debt," he said.

The GOP move comes a day after the Democrats decided to refrain from asking for earmarks for only private projects but to continue to set aside money for public agencies.

Boehner's move will appeal to the GOP base, which has had doubts about whether House Republicans are towing the conservative line when it comes to taxes and spending.

Orange County's Chip Hanlon wrote this on his RedCounty blog on Thursday: "Frustrated Republicans: give these guys a second look. Our House Leadership may indeed be getting back to their senses on fiscal responsibility. This is a massively positive development. Congratulations to John Boehner."

The move by the GOP to do this made **Rep. John Campbell** particularly happy. **Campbell**, R-Irvine, has been on a crusade against earmarks since he came to Congress in 2006. He never requests any for his district.

And he doesn't believe Republican lawmakers will pay a price at the ballot box in November for not bringing home the bacon this year.

"A small cadre of people who seek earmarks will be very upset about this," said Campbell.
ut the vast majority of voters know this is the right thing to do, particularly in this environment."

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Orange County's sole Democratic congressional lawmaker does not agree and defended her earmarks.

If representatives did not modify the president's budget by including money for things in their districts, said Rep. Loretta Sanchez, then Washington bureaucrats would be making decisions that the Constitution says belong to House lawmakers.

"I have a better understanding what's important to Orange County than a bureaucrat who may never have been to Orange County in his life," said Sanchez, D-Santa Ana, who brought home \$2.6 million in personal earmarks in 2009.

Sanchez said she remembers when Sen. John McCain called the widening of the 22 freeway pork. McCain and Rep. Ed Royce, R-Fullerton, for years worked with Citizens Against Government Waste, which produces a yearly Pig Book, which chronicles what it says is wasteful spending

"You ask anybody in my district how much and how long we waited for that 22 to be widened," Sanchez said. The same is true, she said, for the Santa Ana River flood control project which she says will guard against dangerous flooding in Orange County.

But Royce, who did join with Sanchez in seeking money for the Santa Ana project, said the issue is the nation's financial stability.

"We're approaching the point where the revenue that comes into the government is only financing entitlements and interest on the debt," said Royce. "For everything else we're having to borrow right now. We have to draw the line."

Sanchez said she's not worried that if Democrats continue to request earmarks that constituents will vote against them this fall.

"I have no problem going toe to toe about the importance of what (her earmarks) have meant to my district and to Orange County," Sanchez said.

Rep. Ken Calvert is the only local lawmaker on the powerful Appropriations Committee. He brought nearly \$2.5 million in funding to Orange County on his own. That doesn't include the projects he joined with the other lawmakers to sponsor and the money he brought to Riverside County, which is the largest part of his congressional district.

But Calvert, R-Corona, said he is on board with this moratorium.

"I think we have to send a message to the American people that we're taking spend too much money seriously," said Calvert, who was the first Orange County lawmaker to put his spending requests on his Web site. He and Royce both said they have not requested any private earmarks for some time.

Rep. Gary Miller, R-Diamond Bar, was traveling late Thursday and could not be reached to comment on the earmark moratorium.'