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TUESDAY PROFILE

Lobbyist sees need for reform but finds good in earmarking process

By Kevin Bogardus

Known for his expertise in lobbying for appropriations, Greg Gill is shocked by how earmarks have grown during his time on Capitol Hill.

"It has gotten to the point now that if you told me the number of earmarks and the process you have to go through, I would say, 'No, you're kidding me,'" he said.

Gill has found little consistency, however, in what members have targeted in amendments to strike spending from appropriations bills.

"There is a need for reform, but a big part of the debate is trying to grab headlines," he said.

As executive vice president and general counsel at Cassidy & Associates, Gill has lobbied for a number of causes to help push through their appropriation requests.

The lobbyist has worked with colleges and universities, cancer research foundations and healthcare institutions. Gill was even swamped by bystanders when he toured congressional offices with Muhammad Ali. With Gill's help, the former heavyweight champion was looking for earmarked funds to support a Louisville, Ky., and museum to promote international understanding.

"Most members do not want to give up that power to the executive branch ... All and all, earmarks have been good for the country," said Gill, who said he is more concerned about spending associated with the Iraq war.

The Cassidy principal cut his teeth on the appropriations beat as a staff member in the 1980s for Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), now the House Democrats' majority leader, as legislative director and associate staff for the House Appropriations Committee.

"I hired Greg because he appeared to be a very competent, hard-working and

"[GILL] IS A VERY LIKABLE MAN. YOU DON'T UNDERRATE THAT IN THIS BUSINESS."

Gerry Cassidy

Cassidy & Associates

likable individual, and that first impression proved to be true," Hoyer said.

Born in Washington, Gill moved several times as his father served in the Army. The family spent three years in Paris before settling in Prince George's County, Md.

Gill's father joined the Capitol Hill police force and encouraged his son to apply for jobs in and around Congress. But the Cassidy principal found his taste for politics on the campaign trail.

Impressed by her book, *Unbought and Unbossed*, Gill signed onto Rep. Shirley



Greg Gill, executive vice president and general counsel at Cassidy & Associates.

BENJAMIN J. MYERS

Chisholm's (D-N.Y.) 1972 presidential campaign and campaigned in Prince George's County as an aspiring delegate for the Democratic convention. Chisholm lost the county to Alabama Gov. George Wallace, Gill noted.

While still an undergraduate, Gill moved to Chisholm's congressional office. Then, as a research assistant for the House Judiciary Committee, he found his way to the panel's impeachment inquiry into President Nixon.

Working under Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), Gill recalled observing depositions from White House counsel John Dean and going on "sensitive" trash runs — watching an incinerator burn confidential documents to ensure state secrets remained closed.

Following his graduation from Frostburg (Md.) State University and the University of Maryland's law school, Gill returned to government service, this time in Annapolis, Md. He served as counsel for a number of committees in the Maryland General Assembly and help write legislation that became law.

Gill then joined Hoyer in Washington. The lobbyist also gained some executive experience in 1989, when he was appointed as drug policy coordinator

for Prince George's County.

His varied experiences led to his hiring at Cassidy & Associates in 1991, according to Executive Chairman Gerry Cassidy. Gill's experience as a lawyer is part of what makes him indispensable.

"One of the things he could do for us, besides lobbying, was play the role of attorney," Cassidy said. With "a wide circle of friends on the Hill," according to Cassidy, Gill "is a very likable man. You don't underrate that in this business."

"His 16 years with the firm make a case for how important he is to the firm," Cassidy added. Yet Gill's expertise may lead to a sometimes-strange set of responsibilities.

"Greg is one of the only people who I know will come to me and say that this client is not worth having ... We may give him that role: client firer," Cassidy joked.

Though lobbying now, Gill has stayed active in politics. The Maryland resident helped Hoyer as part of his whip operation for the House majority leader race and worked in last year's midterm elections for another friend.

"He was one of those people who can see through a primary into a general," Sen. Ben. Cardin (D-Md.) said. Gill was a senior adviser to Cardin's campaign against former Maryland Lt. Gov.

Michael Steele (R).

"He asked me a lot of tough questions along the way," Cardin said. The senator estimated that he has known Gill for 25 years, working with him as the Maryland state assembly's speaker as well as a U.S. House member.

The lobbyist said he has considered running for elected office — either for Maryland state delegate or for member of Congress. But Gill does not think he could be so careful with his words like many candidates have to do today.

He is keeping a close eye on the 2008 presidential race. At the moment, the lobbyist is "torn" between the two Democratic front-runners: Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.).

Gill said he suspects, however, he soon will throw his weight behind New York's junior senator. The two first met when she was a staff lawyer on Rodino's committee. In addition, Gill's wife of 22 years, Thomasina Rogers, was a political appointee in the Clinton administration.

Nevertheless, Gill said his most vital concern is that next year's presidential race goes blue.

"No matter what, I want a Democrat in the White House," he said.