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Guidance should come today on a new House rule that bans lawmakers from having a stake in their pork.

According to a new anti-corruption measure, House members who tack special spending requests, or earmarks, onto legislation must fully identify the recipient and certify in writing that neither they nor their spouses have a "financial interest" in the earmark.

Last week, some members blew the Friday deadline for submitting their earmarks, amid head-scratching over what "financial interest" means. Some wondered, for example: If Congressman X owns the company that gets the highway contract under the earmark, the forbidden path from pork to pocketbook is clear. But what if the highway merely increases the value of the congressman's house? Does that count?

Last week, Minority Leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) asking for guidance on the question, which he said threatened to put members in a "dangerous" position.

The day before the deadline, Rep. Jerry Lewis (Calif.), the ranking Republican on the Appropriations Committee, which receives most earmark requests, asked chairman David R. Obey (D-Wis.) for a two- to three-week extension, until the ethics committee comes up with "clear, concise guidance to all House Members -- with illustrations of what does and does not constitute a rule violation."

On deadline day, Republicans Lee Terry (Neb.), Vern Buchanan (Fla.) and Adrian Smith (Neb.) wrote Obeys to say, in boldface type, that "based on these developments, we have decided to submit NO earmark requests at this time for any purpose until these issues have been resolved to the satisfaction of all Members of the House." The three cited a letter from Rep. David Dreier (Calif.), the ranking Republican on the Rules Committee, that they said warned them that the ethics committee had not clarified the financial interest question.

The House ethics committee is expected to issue guidance on the rule today, said Pelosi spokesman Nadeam Elshami.

As the appropriations cycle revs up, confusion over the financial interest requirements comes amid other questions about the Democrats' earmark reform package. Some members, for example, have expressed uncertainty over whether earmark requests for regional projects signed by more than one lawmaker count against each member's individual pork allotment.

Still, some wondered whether at least a few questions were part of a dog-ate-my-homework effort to buy time or leniency on earmarks.

The Democrats will be having none of that, Elshami said. "Democrats have done more to reform the culture of corruption in two months than Republicans have done in two years," he said. "We will work with like-minded Republicans to address any glitches in the reform package, but we will not support any efforts to undo these fundamental reforms." The ethics committee, whose job it is to clarify the rules for members, could not respond to questions about how many members came forward with specific questions about the earmarks package, citing confidentiality rules.

Meanwhile, the Appropriations Committee signaled forgiveness on the blown

deadline and pledged to help members confused about the earmarks process.

"We will look at the guidance . . . and we will work with members to address whatever issues they might have," committee spokeswoman Kirstin Brost said.

