

Washington budgets an extra \$120 million for guarding the Trumps

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The US Congress is preparing to pass a budget that includes an additional \$120 million to cover the massive extra costs of guarding US President Donald Trump and his family as it pursue its lavish lifestyle, now directly subsidized by the American people.

The money is part of a stopgap spending agreement that Congress is expected to pass this week, and will cover the skyrocketing costs of guarding the Trumps only for the next five months.

The additional funding is split roughly 50-50 between covering the amount spent by the Secret Service and the reimbursing of local police departments, particularly those of New York City and Palm Beach County, Florida, for the huge expenses they have incurred protecting the Trumps.

The amount going to the Secret Service includes \$34 million for “physical protection” of not only Trump but the rest of the “first family.” A growing strain on the agency has resulted from what the *New York Times* referred to as “the family’s travels, from business trips to Vancouver and Dubai by Mr. Trump’s adult sons to ski weekends in Aspen, Colo., and Whistler, British Colombia by his daughter Ivanka.”

These two ski trips—to five-star resorts beyond the reach of all but the top one percent—entailed major expenses for the Secret Service. Government purchase orders obtained by NBC News show that the agency spent \$66,538.42 on the Canadian excursion, \$59,654 for hotel expenses for its agents and another \$6,884 to secure them “multi-day ski passes.”

Trump’s daughter Ivanka and her husband, the 36-year-old multimillionaire real estate developer Jared Kushner, are both Trump’s closest “presidential advisors” in an administration dominated by nepotism, self-dealing and the shameless intermingling of personal profits and state policy.

The lion’s share of the additional funding, however, is driven by the need to deploy Secret Service agents on what amounts to a full-time basis to protect the family’s multiple mansions.

First, there is the \$90 million penthouse triplex in midtown Manhattan’s Trump Tower, where the “first lady,” Melania Trump, has elected to stay with her son Barron, rather than moving into the White House. Some \$23 million of the additional funding is going to install security equipment and additional personnel at the gilded tower on Fifth Avenue.

Meanwhile, the NYPD is being paid back for the \$300,000 it spent daily to protect Trump Tower between Election day and Trump’s inauguration, as well as the roughly \$140,000 it has spent every day since. These massive outlays are being made in a city where 77 percent of public school students are living in poverty and where 60,000 people, many of them children, spend each night in dilapidated homeless shelters, while thousands more sleep in the streets.

Then, there is Trump’s Mar-a-Lago members-only resort in Palm Beach, Florida. In addition to the money spent by the Secret Service securing the estate and flying Trump back and forth to what he has alternately called his “Summer White House” and “Winter White House,” the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office has incurred extra costs of \$60,000 a day when Trump is in residence.

Since taking office, Trump has flown to Palm Beach seven times, spending 25 of his first 100 days at his private Florida resort.

Congress is expected to approve with ample bipartisan support the huge outlays for guarding the Trumps as part of the spending bill it must pass by the end of this week to avoid a government shutdown.

There has been no public debate over the lavishing of

hundreds of millions of dollars on providing bodyguards and high-tech security installations to protect what more and more resembles a royal family of multimillionaire nobodies and financial parasites, paid for at the expense of working people.

While members of Congress are prepared to ruthlessly cut billions of dollars from public education and social services along with gutting programs that pay for school lunches for children, help the poor heat their homes or provide assistance to the homeless, they fail to bat an eye at providing skiing passes for Ivanka Trump's Secret Service bodyguards or paying to guard Donald Trump's members-only club.

In the end, these expenses are only the small change of an oligarchical society, in which hundreds of millions of working people, the great mass of American society, are compelled to sacrifice their living standards and basic rights to support the wealth and privileges of the top one percent of society that has monopolized fully 20 percent of national income and owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent.

If there is a bipartisan acceptance of these expenses, it is because the support for and participation in oligarchical rule is common to both the Democrats and Republicans, with the Clintons and Obamas trading in their political connections for massive payoffs from Wall Street that have elevated them into the social realm of the financial aristocracy.

There is in all of this, the mindless self-seeking activities of Trump and his children, the "Summer" or "Winter" White House and the army of bodyguards required to protect "the first family," more than a whiff of the France of Louis XVI and its royal court at Versailles or the Russia of Tsar Nicholas and its Summer and Winter Palaces.

The parallels are symptomatic of a social order that is rotting on its feet, riven by unsustainable social inequality and creating with each and every new outrage against the working class the conditions for its own revolutionary overthrow.



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