

Democrats, Republicans, Biden agree on staggering increase in military budget

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The Biden administration and congressional leaders in both the Democratic and Republican parties reached agreement early Wednesday on the passage of an overall budget bill funding federal spending for the rest of the current fiscal year, which runs until September 30.

The House of Representatives passed the legislation Wednesday night, divided into two sections. The military spending portion, providing a record \$782 billion to the build-up of the US military machine, passed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote. The social spending portion, smaller at \$730 billion, passed on a near party-line vote, 260-171, supported by all but one Democrat and only 39 Republicans.

The bill is massive, both in terms of the funds allocated, some \$1.5 trillion, and in its physical size, more than 2,700 pages. Dozens of extraneous provisions were inserted in the “must-pass” legislation, while other measures were stripped out to appease Senate Republicans, whose support was required to overcome any filibuster.

The record military spending is supplemented by another \$14 billion, labeled “aid to Ukraine,” although the bulk of it is spending to support US military operations in Eastern Europe, including the deployment of thousands of additional troops, tanks and warplanes.

The total comes to nearly \$800 billion, more than any US administration has ever spent on military operations for a single year. The Biden administration initially requested \$715 billion for the Pentagon. Congress raised this figure by \$25 billion in the National Defense Authorization Act passed late last year. The appropriations bill adds another \$42 billion, plus the Ukraine money.

To this should be added most of the appropriation for the Department of Energy, which manages the

production of US nuclear warheads before they are loaded into bombs and missiles, and much of the spending for the Department of Homeland Security, which reached a record \$106 billion, an increase of 11 percent, as well as spending on the intelligence agencies.

Total spending by all departments of the federal government for the military-intelligence apparatus certainly exceeds \$1 trillion, more than the next eight countries in the world combined. By comparison, the Russian military budget is estimated at \$62 billion, about one-sixteenth of the US total.

Other provisions include support for “counterterrorism” efforts in Africa, an additional \$1 billion for Israel’s Iron Dome rocket defense system, and money for the State Department to promote pro-Israeli, anti-Palestinian measures such as the Abraham Accords, reached under the Trump administration, between the arch-reactionary oil sheikdoms and the Zionist state.

In order to obtain Senate Republican support for the “omnibus” bill before the next federal shutdown deadline of Friday midnight, the White House, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi agreed to virtually every demand by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama, the senior Republican on the Appropriations Committee.

McConnell issued a statement declaring, “This agreement provides significantly more money than the Biden Administration requested for defense and significantly less money than the Administration requested for non-defense. At my insistence, it also provides much more money for Ukraine than Democrats had proposed, particularly for authorities and funding to deliver crucial military equipment to

Ukraine quickly.”

“The Omnibus rejects liberal policies and effectively addresses Republican priorities,” Shelby gloated. “The House and Senate should act quickly and send it to the President.” Among the Democratic concessions, he cited the dropping of an effort to rescind the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of Medicaid or other federal money to pay for abortions.

Liberal Democrats sought to use the Ukraine crisis as a justification for their support for the record military spending. “I do support military aid to Ukraine,” said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Democrat, New York). “I think that’s the thing. We never support the defense budget.” Oregon Representative Earl Blumenauer said, “It’s situational. And there’s a lot riding on it. We need to support Ukraine.”

The White House also cited the Ukraine aid, as well as a \$46 billion increase in domestic social spending, as reasons for supporting the bipartisan deal. But the total spending deviates from Democratic Party claims of “parity” between military and non-military spending, providing \$782 billion for the military and \$730 billion for all other discretionary spending by the federal government.

Speaking on behalf of the White House, budget director Shalanda Young said in a statement: “The bipartisan funding bill is proof that both parties can come together to deliver for the American people and advance critical national priorities... It will mean historic levels of assistance for the Ukrainian people, a bold new initiative to drive unprecedented progress in curing cancer and other diseases, and more support to keep our communities safe.”

The latter was a reference to additional funding for state and local police agencies, mainly through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Justice Department.

The division of the omnibus spending bill into two parts is for the purposes of political posturing. All the Democrats and a handful of Republicans approved the domestic social spending, while most Republicans and all but seven Democrats approved the military spending. Each measure contains a provision to combine the two into a single bill when it goes to the Senate later in the week.

In a significant exposure of the reactionary maneuvering to obtain passage of the bill, Speaker

Pelosi removed a \$15.6 billion provision for supplementary COVID-19 spending from the omnibus bill, which delayed the planned vote from the afternoon until late at night. She did so after many “progressive” Democrats objected to the method used to finance the COVID-19 supplement, which was to raid funds already previously appropriated under last year’s American Relief Act but not yet sent to state and local governments for distribution.

In other words, the COVID-19 “spending” was not new money at all, in contrast to the Ukraine military supplement, which is added to the money being allocated to the Pentagon. There was widespread opposition from Democratic representatives spread across some 30 states that would lose money. In a letter to the Democratic caucus, Pelosi admitted that states would lose about 9 percent of the federal funds they were expecting to receive. This admission only generated more opposition, so Pelosi simply pulled the bill from the floor so that it could be hurriedly revised and resubmitted.

The episode demonstrates both the cynical and reactionary character of the congressional Democratic leadership, and the timidity of the “opposition” by progressives, if it even merits the name. All factions of the Democratic Party will be united in passage of the overall legislation, in both the House and Senate, providing the biggest bonanza in history for the US war machine.



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