

In response to Trump's proposed 2026 budget

Congressional Republicans demand more money for military, cruel cuts in healthcare

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The congressional Republican response to President Donald Trump's initial budget proposal, made public in outline form last Friday, has been to demand an even greater display of militarism.

Although the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, covering the period from October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026, will be the first to provide more than \$1 trillion for the Pentagon (plus billions more in military spending stashed in the budgets of other departments) three prominent Senate Republicans issued statements opposing the military portion of the budget as inadequate.

The three include former Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, now chair of the Defense appropriations subcommittee, Susan Collins, chair of the Budget Committee, and Roger Wicker, chair of the Armed Services Committee. All focused their criticism on the decision of the Office of Management and Budget to keep the official Pentagon budget request at \$893 billion, the same as the current fiscal year, while incorporating an additional \$150 billion in the "reconciliation" bill currently being worked on in both the House and Senate.

The advantage, from the standpoint of the White House, is that the reconciliation bill cannot be filibustered by the Democrats and they can push through the huge rise in military spending without an equivalent rise in domestic social spending, a trade-off frequently made in contrast to the more cumbersome appropriations process, where bipartisan support is necessary.

This mechanism would also make the additional military funding available immediately, rather than after October 1, allowing the administration to carry out

the types of aggression that Trump has already threatened, including seizure of Greenland and the Panama Canal, or a great expansion of US military operations in the Middle East or the Asia-Pacific region.

The disadvantage, from the standpoint of the Republican Senate leaders, is that Congress will have little oversight on the additional spending, and the baseline for the Pentagon is not raised on a more permanent basis. McConnell declared that the White House was trying to avoid confronting what he called "the growing, coordinated challenges we face from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and radical terrorists." Wicker claimed the budget request would be "a cut in real terms" for the military. Collins, a supposed "moderate" Republican, voiced "serious objections to the proposed freeze in our defense funding given the security challenges we face."

These objections have been far louder and carried far more weight than anything voiced by the Democrats, who have adopted a policy of bipartisan collaboration with the Trump administration, particularly in the area of national-security spending. Here their main goal is to pressure Trump to restore US funding and arms aid for the war against Russia in Ukraine.

There has been no significant Democratic response to the biggest single increase proposed in the Trump budget, some \$44 billion more for the Department of Homeland Security to intensify the arrest, detention and deportation of immigrants and to further militarize the US-Mexico border.

The ultra-right *Wall Street Journal* noted in an editorial that it seemed contradictory for Trump to boast about record low numbers of migrants crossing

the border, and at the same time demand billions to strengthen fortifications against those immigrants who aren't coming.

In overall terms, the Trump budget would raise spending for the military, DHS and Veterans' Affairs, while cutting discretionary spending for all other government agencies by 32 percent—a cut by one-third in a single year.

More details have emerged of the proposed \$163 billion in social cuts proposed in the Trump budget, with the largest share hitting healthcare services, ranging from research and development to providing Medicaid benefits for the poorest sections of working people, those without health insurance.

The cuts are proposed in what is classified as “non-defense discretionary spending,” which accounts for \$720 billion this year and would fall to just \$557 billion in 2026. Benefit payments for Medicare, Social Security, food stamps and other so-called entitlement programs—because the government has a legal obligation to make the payments to eligible recipients—are not addressed in the budget process and would require separate legislation to change.

The most ferocious measures would target Medicaid, which underwrites healthcare for the poor and the disabled. House Ways and Means Committee Chair Jason Smith (R-Missouri) hailed the budget document because he said it “shows an openness” to imposing new work requirements for adult Medicaid beneficiaries. According to the nonprofit Urban Institute, such a requirement could cut off benefits to as many as 5 million adults aged 19 to 55, most unable to work because of health, disability or family responsibilities (such as caring for children or elderly parents).

Among the most important cuts in addition to healthcare are:

- A 40 percent cut in discretionary funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- A cut of 30 percent for the Department of the Interior, which manages federal land, including the national parks.
- A 30 percent cut in the Department of Labor, including the wiping out of units that track unsafe conditions and employer abuses and eliminating the Job Corps, employing tens of thousands of young people.
- Eliminating virtually all spending linked to

monitoring or combating climate change, including in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee will begin discussions over Medicaid cuts Tuesday and Wednesday, but has postponed an actual markup—the drafting of the legislation—until next week, because of differences among the Republicans.

Speaking Sunday on NewsNation, Representative Don Bacon of Nebraska said, “We’re also debating how much to cut like Medicaid, right. I have found \$500 billion we can save or most Americans would support it. But we have folks that are in our conference who want to do \$880 billion. And they have to show us how this will not impact Medicaid or the people on it.”

In effect, the Republicans are debating whether to amputate two limbs or three, while the Democrats say little and do nothing.



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