
US Senate Cuts Social Spending by \$5 Trillion, Ups War Budget

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The nonbinding budget resolution passed with support from Senate Republicans in a 52-46 vote, with all Democratic Party Senators opposed to the budget.

Two far-right Republican senators who are running or considering running for president, Ted Cruz and Rand Paul, also voted against their party's budget. The Senate budget is similar to one passed by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives Wednesday. A combined budget from both houses of Congress is expected to be passed next month, meaning the U.S. legislature will complete its first full budget in six years.

A full budget would allow Republicans to invoke parliamentary rules to repeal one of President Barack Obama's signature pieces of legislation, the Affordable Care Act, with a simple majority in the Senate rather than a 60 vote threshold.

The Senate budget seeks to eliminate deficits by 2025 without raising taxes through deep cuts, which will mostly impact social welfare programs, transportation and education, as well as other domestic programs.

Although the U.S. already spends more on its armed forces than any other country in the world, the budget includes an increase of US\$38 billion in military spending with to an off-budget war

funding account. Military spending will be a jaw-dropping US\$612 billion next year, a 4.5 percent increase over current spending.

The budget was approved after an 18-hour session that included more than 50 nonbinding amendments that appeared to be more about political posturing than policy changes. Senator Dianne Feinstein told the Huffington Post she found process to be “vague, often misleading, and just used for political purposes.”

Among the amendments was a symbolic rollback of the Obama administration's carbon emissions rules for power plants, a unanimous vote to make it easier to reimpose sanctions if Iran violates any nuclear deal, and a surprising vote that improved access to paid sick leave for workers.

Under the convoluted U.S. spending process, the budgets do not become law, but instead influence government agency funding bills later in the year. Because it is not a law, it cannot be vetoed by President Obama.

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