

Background

On March 16, President Trump sent a preliminary budget blueprint to Congress – also known as a “skinny” budget -- that would radically change the way the United States operates. His chief strategist and an architect of the budget, ethno-nationalist Steve Bannon, has called for “deconstructing the administrative state,” highfalutin language for dismantling government programs that provide social safety nets for working Americans and ensure that our diplomats not only have security at their posts overseas, but also have what they need to do business around the world.

A full budget proposal, complete with budget tables, is expected to be sent to Congress later this spring or early summer. It is widely accepted that Congress will not pass the Trump budget as it stands now. Even members of the Republican Party, like South Carolina Senator Lindsay Graham, have called it “[dead on arrival](#).” Nevertheless, it’s important to understand Trump’s budget and the damage that it would do to America as we know it. Moreover, Congress needs to hear from Americans that they don’t want radical changes to the overall budget, nor the programs that fall within it. Below are three ways to make sense of the Trump budget blueprint:

1. Trump’s budget hurts American families.

- President Trump’s \$54 billion increase in defense spending – especially increases for nuclear weapons and other weapons of war -- is paid for by deep cuts to [domestic discretionary spending](#), meaning: *social safety net programs like Meals on Wheels, funding for the EPA to ensure clean air and clean water, funding for the State Department to maintain stability around the world, funding to oversee safety of mines and worker protections, funding for low- and moderate-income students to afford to go to college, heating assistance, and Meals on Wheels, to name just some of the programs on the chopping block.*
- Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) [described](#) Trump’s budget proposal as like taking “a meat ax to programs that benefit the middle class.”

2. Trump’s budget makes us less safe.

- In 2013, current Secretary of Defense James Mattis [told](#) a congressional committee, “If you cut the State Department’s budget, then you need to buy me more bullets.” In other words, when you cut out diplomacy, warfare becomes far more [likely](#).
- In February, 120 retired Generals and Admirals sent a [letter](#) to Congress strongly opposing cuts to the State Department. As they argue, most foreign policy challenges America face don’t have a military solution but rather a political one. Moreover, even when war is necessary, it

cannot be won by military might alone. As the letter states, “The military will lead the fight against terrorism on the battlefield, but it needs strong civilian partners in the battle against the drivers of extremism – lack of opportunity, insecurity, injustice, and hopelessness.”

3. Trump’s budget for the Pentagon is not based on its real needs.

- Trump’s proposal would roll out the [largest military budget](#) since the post 9/11 era. The 10 percent spending increase would even rival that of the Reagan administration’s first year in office during the height of the Cold War.
- President Trump’s idea that such a spending hike is needed because of a depleted budget and a “readiness crisis” doesn’t add up. The U.S. military already spends more on defense than the next seven countries’ military budgets [combined](#). Furthermore, President Trump and Steve Bannon’s notion of “military readiness” is [outdated](#); heavy machinery capabilities and large naval assets may be needed for a large-scale conventional war, but this is not the type of threat the U.S. is currently facing. We are, however, facing threats from smaller non-state actors and terrorists, which our skilled special ops teams, cyber warfare technology, and drone weaponry sufficiently combats for a fraction of the total costs.
- The Pentagon does not even have the [ability to undergo an audit](#), despite that being a requirement written into a 1994 law. As the Chairman of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee wrote recently, “The reason these problems persist [at the Pentagon] is simple: a failure of leadership and a lack of accountability.” Despite this, every year Congress provides the Pentagon over half of the federal discretionary spending. We should stop providing it more money until we know what we’re spending taxpayer dollars on.
- The Pentagon itself has identified \$25 billion per year in [wasteful spending](#) and has still yet to undergo an audit or trim waste. Why should we gut vital programs for our nation’s security and well-being when the Pentagon has yet to start dealing with its own waste?

Below are just a few examples of the Trump budget’s harmful and illogical cuts

(All cuts are compared to last year’s level)

Programs: National Endowment of the Arts and National Endowment of the Humanities, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Institute for Library Services.

Budget cut: total programmatic elimination

Description of programs: NEA, NEH, CPB, and ILS have helped countless artists and scholars thrive, brought joy to children, and provided knowledge and educational entertainment to millions. The Washington Post [outlines](#) just a small selection of activities and people that these programs assist. “A community orchestra performance, a new work from an emerging playwright, art therapy for a returning veteran, local -library classes in Braille, free standardized-test preparation, Bert and Ernie.”

Quick fact: The NEA and NEH budgets, totaling \$296 million per year, make up less than .01 percent of the federal budget. They cost [less](#) per year than spending on military marching bands, at \$437 million per year.

Program: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Budget cut: \$200 million

Description of program: [According to](#) the non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), WIC provides nutritious foods, counseling on healthy eating, breastfeeding support, and health care referrals to nearly 8 million low-income women, infants, and children at nutritional risk — and leads to long-term benefits. Each year, the program has been able to meet the needs of all applicants; funding cuts may change that. Cuts to WIC could mean low-income women can't provide the nourishment that their babies need to grow into healthy children.

Quick Fact: The cut to the WIC program, \$200 million, is about the same amount as the cost of just *one* of the 68 F-35 fighter jets procured in fiscal year 2016. To date, the F-35 program [has cost taxpayers](#) \$400 billion and when all is said and done, it is expected to cost upwards of \$1.45 trillion.

Department: Department of State

Budget cut: \$11 billion or 29 percent

Description of Dept: The State Department is the primary entity of the U.S. Government that executes U.S. foreign policy. It is responsible for advancing U.S. interests abroad, meaning everything from treaty negotiations and maintenance of international agreements to direct foreign aid and other development assistance. The tools of the State Department are meant to help create stability across the globe, a key interest of the United States.

Quick facts: The total State Department budget is less than one percent of federal spending. The \$11 billion in cuts to the State Department amounts to 1.7 percent of the entire Department of Defense budget at \$638.6 billion. Last year, the country spent a little more than the equivalent amount, or \$12.5 billion, building new nuclear weapons and maintaining the infrastructure that support nuclear weapons production.