



Written by [Veronique de Rugy](#) on March 22, 2018

Swamp Spending 101: The Omnibus Spending Bill

Republicans are once again proving why they actually deserve the label of the biggest swamp spenders. The latest gigantic omnibus spending bill would fund the government for the remainder of the fiscal year — with a price tag of \$1.3 trillion. That doesn't include entitlement funding or payments for the interest on our debt — which continue to grow and drive our debt higher, as Republicans have apparently given up on slowing down spending.



Most Republicans favor the bill as a way to avoid the self-inflicted risk of another government shutdown. Never mind that members have had no time to read the 1,000-page bill and figure out what is actually in it. They just have to take Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer's word. He said, "It has some things no one likes, and it has a lot of things not everybody likes but most people like. It was a fair compromise."

Schumer's uncharacteristic cheerfulness about the measure probably had much to do with the \$900 million in funding for the Gateway tunnel project, a boondoggle supported by all New York-area lawmakers. It most likely won't be in the final bill, though, because President Donald Trump threatened to veto the bill if the project were to be included. Immigration is another sticky point, but we can all expect it to be resolved at some point by nudging the right people for their support.

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You can also expect Republicans and President Trump to spin this as a "huge" victory for their team. After all, isn't it a sign that they can govern? Sure, if you tolerate massive deficit spending, being irresponsible and pushing all that liability down the throat of future generations. I don't, because I actually care about the well-being of my kids and grandkids.

To be fair, this is no surprise. These are the same guys who agreed back in February to add \$300 billion of spending over two years to the already monstrous federal tab. Showing yet again that bipartisanship isn't good news for those of us who care about the fiscal path our country is on, the agreement blew the budget caps that were meant to control excess spending by opportunistic politicians.

Democrats are, of course, loving it. Let's face it; they know that when Republicans are in power, they can act like a drunken teenager with Daddy's credit card, but they sober up when they have the gavel. What's worse, Republicans are terrible negotiators. For example, Democrats have once again managed to get most of their non-defense priorities funded by the Republican-controlled Congress and White House in exchange for allowing more defense spending. The result is a \$143 billion boost to this year's spending above budget caps. Who cares about budget rules and deficits when you can throw more cash at the Department of Defense?

This will, of course, lead to much larger deficits than originally projected. According to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, red ink for 2018 will reach \$800 billion. That's a solid \$230 billion higher than what was projected by the Congressional Budget Office in its June 2017 10-year forecast.



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That's a whole \$2 trillion in additional debt after just one year of Republican control of the legislative and executive branches.

Larger deficits also mean larger interest payments. A CRFB analysis found that "interest payments will quadruple, topping \$1 trillion per year in as little as a decade. That's more than we will spend each year on the military or Medicaid, and as a share of the economy, it is the highest in history.... Over the next decade, we'll spend around \$7 trillion — \$55,000 per household — just servicing our debt."

The economy is growing. The scale of the Afghanistan War is relatively small — and even some defense hawks recognize that there's enough waste and unnecessary spending already in the military budget that could be cut to pay for whatever modernization is necessary. Unemployment is going down, and people feel more hopeful about the economy. This is hardly the time for Republicans to deliver the biggest increase to federal spending in years. Yet that's what is happening. Don't be fooled by the forthcoming victory dance.

Veronique de Rugy is a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. To find out more about Veronique de Rugy and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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