



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 28, 2024

Republicans Tout Appropriations Bill That Cuts Funding to DOJ and ATF

Representative Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), chairman of the House subcommittee tasked with appropriating funds to the Department of Justice, [celebrated proposed cuts](#) to both the ATF's and the FBI's budgets for next year: "This bill ... cut[s] wasteful spending and push[es] back on blatant attempts [by the ATF and the FBI] to weaponize our justice system for political gain.... It specifically reins in the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI] and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives [ATF]."

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole (R-Okla.) iterated the same theme: "This bill ... halts the weaponization of the federal government against its citizens and enhances congressional oversight [of those two agencies]."

From the bill itself:

1. It holds "the FBI accountable for targeting everyday Americans by cutting its budget and mandating critical reforms;"
2. It reverses "anti-Second Amendment overreach by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, defunding the ATF's rules on pistol braces and privately made firearms [ghost guns];"
3. It "defund[s] Executive Order 14092, which calls for an assault weapons ban;" and
4. It "defund[s] efforts to federalize state and local policing practices."

In addition, the bill would ban the ATF from using its appropriations to "implement, administer, apply, enforce, or carry out any [ATF] regulation" that has been issued since ... Joe Biden's first full day in office." It would also cut funding to states seeking to implement or expand their "red flag" laws.

The promises made are greatly overstated. The Department of Justice, which employs 113,000 people and presently enjoys a budget of nearly \$38 billion annually, would lose less than a billion dollars (\$987 million, or a cut of about 2.5 percent) if the bill even passes the House, much less the Democrat-controlled Senate or Biden's veto pen.

The ATF, which employs more than 5,200 people and enjoys a budget of \$1.5 billion annually, would suffer a cut of just \$365 million, or less than three percent.

Attorney General Merrick Garland was quick to squeal about the proposed cuts: "This effort to defund the Justice Department and its essential law enforcement functions will make our fight against violent crime all the more difficult. It is unacceptable."

Also quick to criticize the proposed cuts was Hayes Brown, offering his opinion on the matter at



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MSNBC:

While the surgeon general's advisory was developed to save lives, the Republican-drafted bill aims to allow as many guns in as many hands as possible.

If the Republican proposal is passed into law, it will make the crisis that Murthy warned about much, much worse....

The bill would cut funding allocated to the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and severely restrict how the money it does receive can be used....

Zero dollars would be able to go toward funding any state of local "red flag or extreme risk protection order laws" ... [and] would even block federal funding for gun buyback programs, which have been proven effective and reduced the number of guns on the street.

Although the proposed cuts have little chance of passage in the present Congress, Joe Biden's pathetic performance last night during CNN's phantom "presidential debate" might shift control of the Senate to the Republicans and expand the party's tiny sliver of advantage in the House in the next one.

As Brown noted nervously, "the two sides will see how things have shaken out and what leverage there is to pass something [like this] ahead of the next Congress being seated in January."

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