



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 10, 2020

Trump Proposes \$4.8 Trillion Budget, With \$2 billion for Border Wall

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The White House is releasing its budget proposal for fiscal year 2021 (starting on October 1) today, February 10, and administration officials have confirmed some key figures from the document over the weekend.



Fiscal conservatives will be dismayed by the total amount of the budget — \$4.8 trillion —and will be taking a close look at it to see how much it adds to the federal debt, which has increased by \$2.8 trillion since the start of the Trump administration and is projected to increase by \$4.7 trillion through the end of the decade because of spending increases and tax cuts.

While fiscally conservative Republicans are likely to raise concerns over the national debt and deficits, Reuters reported, Democrats are expected to object to the deep spending cuts on domestic programs.

The budget proposes a 21 percent cut in foreign aid, reducing it down from \$55.7 billion enacted in fiscal year 2020 to \$44.1 billion for 2021. It proposes cutting spending on safety net programs, including \$130 billion in Medicare by means of drug pricing reforms, \$292 billion to food stamp and Medicaid programs, by enacting new work requirements for beneficiaries, and \$70 billion through a clamp-down on eligibility for federal disability benefits.

Reuters reported that last year Trump compromised with Congress and signed a two-year budget deal that increased federal spending on both defense and several domestic programs, adding to a growing government debt.

One item that Trump has battled with Congress over is securing funding for his border wall with Mexico, one of his signature promises from his 2016 presidential campaign that is especially popular with his political base. A report in *USA Today* noted that the president is asking Congress for \$2 billion in new funding for construction of the wall.

The New York Times observed that the amount Trump is asking for the wall is far less than the \$5 billion that he sought a year ago, which resulted in a five-week government shutdown. Congress previously agreed to appropriate \$1.375 billion for wall construction, much less than the \$18 billion Trump asked for in 2018. When the standoff with Congress could not be resolved, the Trump administration diverted about \$6.7 billion from military construction funds and illicit drug enforcement funding to pay for the wall. It plans to use \$7.2 billion derived from similar funding this year.

A senior Defense official told CNN that a major announcement about the border wall will be made this week. CNN noted that the administration appears to be increasingly relying on Pentagon funds to meet its



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goal of constructing additional barriers on the border.

Though all revenue bills must originate in the House, budgets must also be approved by the Senate and signed by the president. Though many people still believe that practically all Republicans are fiscally conservative, we reported in an article last October that the Senate rejected, by a vote of 24-67, an amendment by Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) that would have begun to put federal spending on a path to balance by cutting two percent in spending for FY2020 from the FY2019 enacted level.

No Democrats voted for the amendment and only 24 Republicans voted for it, while 25 voted no.

Photo: AP Images

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Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.



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