



## Defending Trump's request for wall funding, congressman inflates foreign aid plan

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January 24, 2019

Lawmakers don't want to be blamed for the partial federal government shutdown, which is now the longest in American history.

So, after President Donald Trump's speech Jan. 8, some Republicans took aim at Democrats Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer for withholding support for Trump's plan. U.S. Rep. Richard Hudson, a Republican from Concord, was among those critics.

"Just last week, Democrats voted to give \$54 billion in foreign aid.

All [@POTUS@realDonaldTrump](#) is asking for is 10 cents of every dollar they want to give to foreign governments to go to secure our border and build a wall. Is that too much to ask?"

Hudson [tweeted](#) after Trump's speech.

According to the [White House](#) website, Trump "has requested \$5.7 billion for construction of approximately 234 miles of new steel barrier on the Southern Border, a \$4.1 billion increase over the Senate bill."

To be clear: Experts, even right-leaning ones, agree that neither Trump's request nor a wall would be enough by itself to secure the border. (Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan watchdog organization, called the wall a "[waste](#)" and The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, last year said the wall "[won't work](#).")

But let's set that aside and look solely at Hudson's math and his characterization of the bill the Democrat-controlled U.S. House [passed on Jan. 3](#). Hudson's tweet mischaracterizes both what it pays for and who has supported it.

Not quite \$54B in aid

Generally speaking, estimates on foreign aid spending sometimes vary depending on which agencies and funds are considered, according to the [Council on Foreign Relations](#). For instance, the council estimates aid at more than [\\$40 billion per year](#), and [The Economist](#) reports that foreign aid levels remained at \$35 billion for 2017 and 2018.

As it relates to the bill in question – [HR 21](#), which has passed the House but hasn't come up for a vote in the Senate – [FactCheck.org](#) and the [Washington Post](#) noted that the \$54 billion includes more than foreign aid. It also includes \$16 billion for the [State Department](#), they reported.

The State Department operations budget typically includes a range of items, from embassy security to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's salary, said Stephen Ellis, vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. So it "would be wrong" to conflate department funding with foreign aid funding, Ellis told PolitiFact in an email.

Hudson spokesman Tatum Gibson acknowledged that State Department funding was included in the number the congressman cited, but didn't explain why.

"The point is Democrats voted for tens of billions of dollars for that – roughly \$12 billion more than what the president requested – but won't support President Trump's requested \$5 billion to secure our own borders," Gibson said.

If we subtract the \$16 billion for the state department from Hudson's claim, that leaves us with \$38 billion in foreign aid spending. Trump's \$5.7 billion request is about 15 percent of that.

Not exactly Democrats' idea

Now to the origins of the \$54 billion spending plan. It's misleading to cast the spending plan as a Democratic proposal.

Spending at the same level was first proposed when Republicans controlled the House, as both FactCheck.org and the Washington Post included in their stories.

In June, the House Committee on Appropriations approved a \$54 billion State and Foreign Operations bill. And in July, the Senate Committee on Appropriations approved a similar \$54.4 billion budget.

Our ruling

Hudson said "Democrats voted to give \$54 billion in foreign aid," and that Trump is asking for "10 cents of every dollar they want to give to foreign governments to go to secure our border and build a wall."

Hudson has a point that Trump's \$5.7 billion request is far less than the amount spent on foreign aid. But he incorrectly included standard State Department funding in his claim about foreign aid funds. More importantly, his tweet misleads by giving the impression that the spending plan was Democrats' idea. We rate his claim Mostly False.