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## Budget on pace to be biggest-spending bill in history

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Congress was rushing Thursday to pass what some analysts said could be the biggest bill, by total dollar amount, in U.S. history, setting the stage for perhaps \$2 trillion in new spending over the next decade.

Republican leaders said it was a victory for the Pentagon, envisioning a massive boost in defense spending. Democrats said they won tens of billions of dollars for their priorities, including research, infrastructure and an overall boost in domestic spending.

The 652-page bill was announced just before midnight Wednesday.

Senators are expected to approve the bill, which has the backing of both parties' leaders.

The tougher hurdle will be the House, where some Democrats object to the lack of action on immigration, while conservatives objected to the massive surge in domestic spending.

Budget watchdogs, meanwhile, said the bill set their cause back by years.

"Some may consider this new bipartisan spending deal to be a breakthrough, but it is a breakthrough only in the sense that it breaks through any semblance of fiscal responsibility," said Robert Bixby, head of the Concord Coalition.

The bill sets spending levels at about \$300 billion more than current law over the next two years, and since those numbers get built into the baseline it likely amounts to \$1.5 trillion over the standard 10-year budget window.

"This bill could ultimately be as costly as the ill-advised tax cuts passed earlier this year, setting the stage for more than \$1.5 trillion in debt if the increased cap levels are extended through the decade," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

That alone is nearly double the size of President Obama's 2009 stimulus, which ended up costing \$840 billion.

Chris Edwards, editor of DownsizingGovernment.org at the Cato Institute, said once interest payments on the additional debt are included, the number could reach \$1.8 trillion.

Add in a new round of tax cuts — the bill includes extensions for some 50 tax breaks that didn't make it into last year's massive tax-cut bill — and the price tag grows even larger.

Brian Riedl, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, was not ready to call it the biggest bill. He said he would judge it based on the \$300 billion two-year spending boost it authorized, saying that amounts to an increase of about 1 percent of gross domestic product.

Judged against GDP, he said, past wars, entitlement spending expansions and even stimulus bills may have exceeded that level.

Whatever the new deficits, lawmakers won't have to worry for another 13 months. The bill grants another debt holiday, allowing the government to borrow without restraint.

Mr. Edwards said the crux of the deal was Republicans' eagerness to boost defense spending, which led them to accept the surges in domestic spending as well.

“As during the George W. Bush years, the eagerness of Republicans to jack up defense spending has led them to cave in on nondefense spending,” he said.