

The Truth-O-Meter Says:



Says Paul Ryan "voted for two wars that were unpaid for, voted for the Bush tax cuts that were unpaid for, voted for the prescription drug bill that cost as much as my health care bill -- but wasn't paid for."

[Barack Obama](#) on Thursday, April 14th, 2011 in remarks at a campaign fundraiser

President Barack Obama says Rep. Paul Ryan voted for wars, tax cuts and a drug bill that weren't paid for

In closed-door [remarks to campaign supporters](#) on April 14, 2011, President Barack Obama looked back in frustration at lengthy negotiations with Republicans over funding to keep the federal government operating.



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Obama opined, as a [CBS News online story](#) reported, that he expects Republicans to continue using the budget process to "enact their political agenda under the guise of cutting spending."

The president singled out U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., the House Budget Committee chairman who has authored a long-term deficit-reduction plan.

"When Paul Ryan says his priority is to make sure, you know, he's just being America's accountant, trying to be responsible ... This is the same guy who voted for two wars that were unpaid for, voted for the Bush tax cuts that were unpaid for, voted for the prescription drug bill that cost as much as my health care bill -- but wasn't paid for," Obama told his supporters. "So it's not on the level."

In making the remark, Obama pointed to several big-ticket items approved during the Bush administration while Ryan was in Congress -- ones he says have helped drive the nation's record deficits.

Given the prominence of the protagonists and the timeliness of the comments, we decided to take a look at Obama's critique of Ryan.

With the words, Obama is offering an opinion about how Ryan has framed his budget-cutting efforts. We can't fact-check the president's opinion about Ryan's message. But we can focus on the factual assertions, and try to put them into some context.

We started with the White House, which declined to comment, saying the president's remarks spoke for themselves.

Let's look at the votes.

There is no dispute Ryan voted for [Afghanistan and Iraq war funding](#); for the [major tax cuts](#) enacted under President George W. Bush in 2001 and [2003](#) (and [extended in 2010](#)); and for the new Medicare prescription drug benefit [created in 2003](#).

All were big-ticket items.

But Obama goes a step further to assert that all were "unpaid for." That's Washington parlance for bills not offset by corresponding spending cuts or tax increases elsewhere in the federal budget.

Budget experts we consulted and the historical record confirm there were no direct offsets built into those bills.

Obama's claim on the prescription drug bill was slightly different -- that it wasn't paid for and "cost as much as my health care bill."

Let's break this into two parts.

Obama appears to refer to the gross outlays needed for the two landmark bills.

For the Medicare prescription drug bill, passed in 2003 and effective in 2006, we found a range of cost estimates for 10 years: \$395 billion to \$720 billion. The [official Congressional Budget Office estimate](#) was the low end.

That was at the time. Now, government estimates show the original cost projections were too high, perhaps by as much as 40 percent, said Jon Gabel, senior fellow in health care research at the National Opinion Research Center.

Obama's health reform bill -- the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#) -- was pricier, with estimates in the [\\$800 billion to \\$1.4 trillion range](#). Ryan and Republicans opposed the bill.

But the two measures were passed seven years apart, so inflation may be a factor.