

Some Conservatives Are Calling Trump's Budget A Conservative Dream

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President Donald Trump's first budget proposal asked Congress for pay for increased military spending with deep cuts to domestic programs that Republicans have dreamed about since before President Ronald Reagan.

Conservative and libertarian groups are mostly in agreement on the budget Trump released Thursday: it's a good start, not perfect, but far better than any budget recent Republican presidents have proposed.

Trump's [America First: A Budget Blueprint To Make America Great Again](#) "looks more like a Ronald Reagan budget than a [George W.] Bush budget," Chris Edwards, the director of tax policy studies at the Libertarian think tank Cato Institute told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

Edwards agreed that the budget is like a conservative's dream in that it offsets spending increases with cuts. Though the budget includes funding for the expensive border wall and billions of additional dollars for the military, the cuts to the domestic budget make up for the increases.

Notably, the budget also does not include details on how much taxpayer money will be spent on the promised infrastructure project. The budget says Trump has "tapped a group of infrastructure experts to evaluate investment options along with commonsense regulatory, administrative, organizational, and policy changes to encourage investment and speed project delivery."

Not everything is rosy, of course. "Trump's priorities don't match mine," Edwards said, "but I give him credit for the offsets he's proposed."

To offset what the budget calls "one of the largest increases in defense spending without increasing the debt," Trump would cut deep into domestic programs. The budget asks to reduce virtually every non-defense agency, for a total of \$1.2 trillion in discretionary spending, about 1.2 percent lower than the enacted 2017 budget.

It even calls for the complete elimination of smaller programs like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities, something budget-conscious conservatives have wanted to do since the Nixon era.

But offsets alone are not enough to get us out of the trillions of dollars of debt, according to Justin Bogie, senior fiscal policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation.

Trump's budget "is merely offsetting increases in spending and not really doing anything to start paying down the national debt in a meaningful way," Bogie told TheDCNF.

While Trump's blueprint budget "is definitely a step in the right direction towards scaling back the reach and scope of the federal government," it could go farther. The Heritage Foundation's [Blueprint for Balance](#) budget proposal from February inspired parts of the Trump administration's budget, but also includes proposals to limit the parts of the budget that lie outside the congressional budget process.

The biggest drain on the federal budget is entitlement programs, sometimes called mandatory spending, which are not subject to House appropriations. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and food and income security benefits account for nearly two-thirds of all federal spending. To address that spending, Congress would need to restructure those programs.

Trump has promised not to touch Social Security or Medicare benefits, and his Thursday budget doesn't mention reducing welfare programs.

Until mandatory spending programs and the tax code are addressed, "it is impossible to determine how fiscally responsible" Trump's budget really is, Bogie said.

Big cuts to discretionary spending are essential after eight years of President Barack Obama, and we "need an axe, not a scalpel, if we are ever going to reduce our debt," Adam Brandon, president of FreedomWorks, said in a statement. "This budget proposal is a serious attempt to trim the fat in many different bloated areas of the federal government," Brandon said.

Trump's budget isn't much more than a wish list, and Congress has a long fight to fund the government next year. Ultimately, Democrats and Republicans in Congress will have to come to a compromise, and passing defense increases has been tough for Republican presidents.

"I believe that non-defense discretionary spending increased every year except for one during [Bush's] presidency," Bogie said.

President Bush "would often cave" to Democratic pressure that increases to defense spending have to be matched in domestic programs, Edwards said.

Still, some are optimistic that even if not everything in Trump's budget will pass Congress, the government will make some progress toward conservative goals. "I am hoping that some of these cuts go through, but probably not all of them will," Edwards said.