

## **GOP trashes Trump's plan to end dozens of government programs**

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President Donald Trump's plan to eliminate dozens of federal agencies and programs has collapsed, as a conservative Republican Congress refuses to go along.

Among the programs spared are agencies promoting rural business development and the arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Community Development Block Grants and the National Wildlife Refuge Fund. Those and many others are getting money in bills approved by the GOP-run House appropriations committee. The House plans to vote on spending bills throughout next week, and the Senate is expected to consider spending plans shortly.

Trump unveiled his \$4.1 trillion budget plan in March, pledging to "reduce the federal government to redefine its proper role and promote efficiency."

But in the House, where all 435 members face voters next fall, budget legislation has far more money than Trump had sought for a host of programs. The spending bill for agriculture contains \$4.64 billion beyond what Trump requested, an increase of about 30 percent. For interior and the environment, the bump was \$4.3 billion or 16 percent. For transportation, housing and urban development, the committee approved \$8.6 billion, about 18 percent, more than the budget request.

"There's that old saying in Washington that the president proposes and Congress disposes," said Steve Ellis, vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan fiscal watchdog.

Indeed, after many House and Senate Republicans complained to Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney in hearings about the impact of some of Trump's cuts, congressional budget-writers quickly made sure they don't happen.

For example, instead of slashing the Appalachian Regional Commission, the House Appropriations Committee last week approved \$130 million for the independent agency, created 52 years ago, that helps fund infrastructure and job-training projects in Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Missouri, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and other Appalachian states that Trump won in 2016.

Lawmakers including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., vowed that doing away with the ARC wasn't going to happen.

"I am very proud that the House Appropriations Committee approved a bill that includes important funding for the ARC, an organization that does a great deal of good in East Tennessee and rural Appalachia," Roe said.

Even agencies and programs conservative Republicans purport to dislike are avoiding the Capitol ax. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has been on the list of programs many conservatives and Republicans have wanted to defund since Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., was House Speaker in the 1990s. Trump wants it off the federal books, too, but House appropriators instead included \$445 million for the agency.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities have also been favorite conservative targets, and got a death sentence in Trump's budget plan. That didn't stop the House Appropriations Committee from approving \$145 million for each endowment last week with plenty of Republican help.

"Throughout this year, we've seen some of the Republican members of that committee saying that they were working hard to make sure that the NEA would be receiving significant funding and certainly rejecting the administration's termination proposal," said Narric Rome, vice president for government affairs for the Americans for the Arts, an advocacy group.

All this still enrages plenty of conservatives.

"The problem with the Republicans is that so many of them aren't team players," said Chris Edwards, director of tax policies studies at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute and editor of DownsizingGovernment.org. "They're parochial or, with appropriators, it's just a single-minded devotion to increase spending on the programs that they fund."

Edwards said he was stunned when leading Republicans railed against Trump's budget plan to eliminate the Community Block Grant Development program, which allocates funds initiatives from affordable housing to after school programs.

House appropriators approved \$2.9 billion for CDBG, \$100 million less than its Fiscal 2017 funding level.

"Appropriators and other Republican congressmen, they love to give speeches about fiscal responsibility, they love to complain how Obama was a big spender, but now's the real test," he said. "Trump has given them the way forward here with some reasonable cuts. Can they rise above their parochial interests and do something that's good for the overall budget here?."

Other budget-watchers note that the real money issues aren't even being addressed. Marc Goldwein, senior vice president and senior policy director for the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, said that even Trump's cuts ignore the fastest growing parts of the federal budget, entitlements like Social Security and Medicare.

"To me, it just doesn't seem to make much sense to be focusing all our energy on cutting the slowest growing part of the budget," he said.