



\$15 Billion Rescission Package Doesn't Mean Much in Actual Cuts

Congressional Budget Office analysts found reductions equal one-fifteenth of value claimed when proposed by President Donald Trump

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June 19, 2018

President Donald Trump proposed a package to rescind \$15 billion in unspent federal funds, but after the House of Representatives finished with it the actual cuts are likely to be worth far less, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

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The proposed "rescission" package is aimed at pulling back appropriated funds from various government programs that are unused or unnecessary. But CBO reported the package would reduce the budget authority by \$15 billion and the actual reduction in outlays equals only \$1 billion between now and 2028. The discrepancy is because the targeted unspent funds have been there for years and likely will remain there.

That's why conservative critics say the proposal does little to rein in out-of-control government spending, especially since only about \$1 billion will actually be cut.

"You are saving \$15 billion in the sense that, if Democrats had their way they would take that money and spend it on other things," Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.) told LifeZette. "The more complex it gets, the greater that wedge that is driven between elected officials and the people because you don't have a parliamentarian sitting in your living room helping you out with this stuff."

The rescission package pales in comparison to the recent \$1.3 trillion omnibus bill, which hiked spending. Trump was hesitant about the bill but signed it March 23 because it secured much-needed funding for the military.

"They just passed, earlier this year, an omnibus that hiked overall discretionary spending by 13 percent, which in a single year is an enormous increase," Chris Edwards, the director of tax policy at the libertarian Cato Institute, told LifeZette. "This package would only trim a tiny

portion of spending. It's billed as a \$15 billion bill, but it would appear there is only about a billion or so in actual cuts in it."

"Most of it seems to be rescinding the spending that has been authorized but hasn't been spent or may or may not have been spent in the future," Edwards said. "So my first reaction is that it's a joke. It just tries to provide political cover for the huge irresponsibility of Republican leaders and all the spending and deficits they've been running. It's a lame effort to shore up some conservative voting support for the election this fall."

Edwards favors the package for taking at least a small step forward. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, he notes, has tried to tackle bigger spending issues like entitlement reform, so, Edwards hopes, the rescission package will encourage lawmakers to do more cutting. The tax analyst also commended Trump for trying to cut spending.

"There is sort of an accounting transparency story here," he said. "It's hard for citizens to control the politicians because accounting is too complicated, and this is an example of that. If they are successful they'll be running around saying they cut \$15 billion, but it's not really \$15 billion — but it's not exactly untrue what they are saying."

Republicans argued the move is a simple housecleaning of the budget since the funds weren't going to be used for their intended purpose. Democrats countered that the package would drain funds from needed programs such as Medicaid, Medicare and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). They also note that the unused funds could still be used elsewhere.

"At the end of the day, \$15 billion worth of rescissions for spending that mostly wasn't going to occur is not going to balance the books, not even close," Taxpayers for Common Sense Vice President Steve Ellis told LifeZette.

"There are no quick fixes and, to put the rescission package into perspective, Congress' budget scorekeeper — the Congressional Budget Office — found that after taking into account what would not have been spent anyway, it will actually only reduce outlays by \$1 billion," Ellis said.

The Senate still must approve the proposal before it can go to Trump for his signature.