



July 20, 2012 | Dustin Siggins

## Was last night's vote on defense appropriations a sign of renewed fiscal conservatism in the GOP?

[Via the Cato blog:](#)

Last night, the House approved a Pentagon budget bill of nearly \$606 billion, \$1.1 billion below the level recommended by the GOP leadership. Congratulations are in order for freshman Republican Mick Mulvaney (SC-5), and retiring Democrat Barney Frank (MA-4), for co-sponsoring the amendment that effectively froze spending at last year's level.

[According to \*Politico\*'s David Rogers](#), “the freeze marks a modest but still important turning point in the budget wars with 89 Republicans joining 158 Democrats on the key 247-167 vote.”

From a purely budgetary standpoint, this is modestly good news. Yes, we need significant cuts in the defense budget (as well as everywhere else), especially with regards to [oversight](#) of inefficient spending and ridiculous mandates from Congress on how contracts have to be fulfilled, so freezing the defense budget isn't good enough, but it is a positive sign that the GOP is once again becoming a fiscally conservative party. It's also a good way to have a big tent, since many libertarians and libertarian-leaning Republicans [are uncertain](#) as to whether or not they should support the GOP.

However, some will fight defense cuts tooth and nail. Over the last few months concerns have arisen among some Republicans that sequestration cuts in defense could harm the economy. [Senator Kelly Ayotte \(R-NH\)](#) and [Senator Jon Kyl \(R-AZ\)](#) have led this charge, and just this week Rob Bluey [posted](#) on Hot Air about a study claiming sequestration could have a devastating impact on the unemployment rate:

The unemployment rate will climb above 9 percent, pushing the economy toward recession and reducing projected growth in 2013 by two-thirds. An already weak

economy will be undercut as the paychecks of thousands of workers across the economy will be affected from teachers, nurses, construction workers to key federal employees such as border patrol and FBI agents, food inspectors and others.

Personally, I think such economic concerns related to defense cuts are misplaced, for the same reasons outlined at the 31:30 mark of [this video](#) by Representative Raul Labrador (R-ID) yesterday. Anthony Randazzo, Director of Economic Research for the Reason Foundation, has a similar opinion to Labrador:

It's disingenuous for Republicans to defend their ideologically-favored projects and then say to Democrats that their ideologically-favored projects should be cut. You have Democrats and Republicans with different frameworks on how they view the world. Defense and justice, fairness, etc. are viewed differently. You can't tell Republicans they can't stand against defense spending cuts, and the same is true for Democrats with regards to social programs. But it's disingenuous for Republicans to tell Democrats cutting their programs won't hurt the economy while they oppose cuts to the Defense Department.

The fact is defense spending is government spending, and by its very nature government spending is inefficient. While I don't think sequestration is the way to go (it doesn't cut enough overall, and what it does cut isn't specifically outlined, meaning worthwhile programs could be hit), we do need to cut spending by hundreds of billions every year in order to prevent a fiscal collapse. Freezing the defense budget is a step in the right direction.