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GOP mobilizes against Democratic spending as Biden releases first budget

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Republicans are gearing up to fight President Joe Biden's massive \$6 trillion federal budget proposal, featuring a projected \$1.8 trillion deficit.

They argue Biden's economic plans will leave the country crippled by higher taxes, debt, and inflation rather than "building back better," as the president himself describes his economic agenda.

"Americans are already hurting from far-left economics that ignore reality. The administration's counterproductive 'COVID relief bill' has slowed rehiring. Families are facing painful inflation, just as experts warned the Democrats' plans might cause. And the Administration wants to triple down on the same mistakes?" said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, in a statement.

The budget document is new, but the bulk of the spending proposals are not: The centerpiece remains the \$4 trillion in already unveiled plans for infrastructure, jobs, childcare, and social welfare.

"I committed to an approach of building an American economy, a different economy, to build back better," Biden said in a speech in Cleveland on Thursday.

While both sides agree the spending is intended to be economically transformative, Republicans and their outside allies contend "different" does not necessarily mean "better."

"Four months into Biden's presidency, the cost of everyday goods is spiking at historic rates, there are still 8 million fewer jobs than before the pandemic, and now the Biden administration is pushing for World War II-era levels of spending that would put the country further into debt," said Whitney Robertson of the conservative America Rising PAC in a statement. "Joe Biden's stifling economic policies are squandering the recovery he inherited and hard-working Americans are paying the price."

"The Biden Administration's proposed FY 2022 budget is an admission of failure," said Brooke Rollins, CEO of the pro-Trump America First Policy Institute, in a statement. "According to this

budget, the Administration's policies will burden our country with unprecedented levels of debt, *and* slow economic growth. It is in effect a return to the days of stagnation and malaise: a 1970s budget and mindset that misses the needs and challenges of the 2020s."

Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute and editor of *Downsizing Government*, argues the behavioral responses to Biden's spending will undermine, rather than stimulate, economic growth.

"The one example that has been much discussed is how large unemployment checks induce people not to work," he said. "Such spending isn't stimulative at all, it undermines output or GDP. But most federal spending distorts this way. The largest federal program, Social Security, is loved by many but it induces people not to save, which undermines growth."

Democrats counter that former President Donald Trump left the economy in tatters amid the pandemic and also oversaw massive federal spending in addition to a large tax cut. As the economy reopens, they would like to expand the welfare state and increase investments in green jobs. Biden dinged over a dozen congressional Republicans he said voted against his \$1.9 trillion "American Rescue Plan" but later touted its benefits to constituents.

"If you're going to try to take credit for what you've done, don't get in the way of what we still need to do," Biden declared in his speech Thursday. "Not a single one of them voted for the rescue plan."

He alleged those GOP members have "no shame."

Biden has been negotiating with Republicans on infrastructure. His plan has a \$2.23 trillion price tag while the GOP is inching toward \$1 trillion, though some liberals dispute whether their counterproposal would really spend that much. But the president has also signaled his patience is wearing thin, and his party's left flank would prefer to act unilaterally by sending him the biggest bill possible with only Democratic votes.

"At first review, we note several constructive additions to the group's previous proposals, including on roads, bridges and rail," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said of the Republican infrastructure counteroffer. "At the same time, we remain concerned that their plan still provides no substantial new funds for critical job-creating needs, such as fixing our veterans' hospitals, building modern rail systems, repairing our transit systems, removing dangerous lead pipes, and powering America's leadership in a job-creating clean energy economy, among other things."

The high spending levels were not the only part of Biden's budget that aroused conservative opposition. The proposed blueprint did not contain the Hyde Amendment, which has since the late-1970s banned most federal funding of abortion.

"For more than four decades, the Hyde family of pro-life policies has kept American taxpayers out of the abortion business, with the Hyde Amendment itself saving nearly 2.5 million lives," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the antiabortion Susan B. Anthony List, in a statement.

“The Biden budget throws that longstanding, bipartisan consensus out the window to fulfill a campaign promise to the radical abortion lobby.”

“Joe Biden once said, ‘Don’t tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value,’” said March for Life Action President Tom McClusky in a statement on the proposed Hyde Amendment removal. “Sadly, this administration does not value human life nor does it represent the wishes of mainstream America on such a critical issue.”