

Reject the Pentagon Spending Surge

The \$1.5 Trillion Request Is the Largest Defense Buildup Since the Korean War

The Trump administration is asking Congress to approve [\\$1.5 trillion in Pentagon spending for FY2027](#) — a [44% increase](#) over the current year's roughly \$1 trillion (\$839 billion base appropriation plus \$152 billion in reconciliation funds the Pentagon is obligating this year). Per [JPMorgan analysts](#), this would be the largest single-year increase since the Pentagon budget tripled in 1951 at the outset of the Korean War. In a single year this appropriation would increase Pentagon spending at a level that the Cold War era [Reagan buildup took five years to achieve](#).

- The request is structured to move through three separate channels — only one of them subject to regular order. \$1.15 trillion is sought through normal discretionary appropriations, which would mark the first time the Pentagon's base budget alone has crossed the \$1 trillion threshold. An additional \$350 billion is being sought through a [separate reconciliation bill](#) that would bypass the Senate filibuster on a party-line vote, covering some of the Pentagon's most expensive priorities — Golden Dome missile defense, drone production, F-35 fighters, and industrial base expansion. A third supplemental bill to fund the open-ended war with Iran, now on its 75th day — which has cost [\\$29 billion](#) so far, has not received official authorization and has neither been formally funded nor accounted for in itemized expenditure reports — has been [requested by the Pentagon for \\$200 Billion](#). Linda Bilmes, the Harvard Kennedy School public-finance lecturer who correctly projected the multi-trillion-dollar long-run cost of the Iraq War, says she is [“certain we will spend \\$1 trillion for the Iran war.”](#) Perhaps we have already racked up that amount.”

At hearings before the House and Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittees on May 12, senior appropriators from both parties raised pointed concerns about the structure of the request.

- **House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole (R-OK)** said the reconciliation strategy [“creates cliffs for this committee in the future”](#) because “at some point, that funding disappears and we would have a massive increase in discretionary funding to sustain it.”
- **Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Chair Mitch McConnell (R-KY)** [objected](#) to placing the Pentagon's top priorities outside regular order: “Political realities will not always allow a party-line budget reconciliation, and if the department's top priorities aren't built into annual appropriations, we're actually taking a big risk.”
- **Sen. Angus King (I-ME)** [pressed Hegseth directly](#) on the use of reconciliation: “Why do we suddenly have a two-part budget where this committee and the Congress generally has oversight and input to a process where a quarter of the budget is essentially a slush fund?”
- **Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT)** [characterized](#) the structure as a negotiating tactic: “They're seeking \$350 billion through reconciliation and \$1.15 trillion in the base budget, but they know reconciliation is a long shot. It's all about trying to make a \$1.15 trillion Pentagon budget seem reasonable in comparison.”

The Spending Steals from Human Needs — and the Pentagon Cannot Account for What It Already Has

Pentagon spending is [already higher in real terms](#) than at the peak of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and during the Reagan-era buildup of the 1980s. The Quincy Institute identifies the three drivers of excessive defense spending as “strategic overreach, pork-barrel politics, and corporate lobbying,” and argues that the current strategy “costs too much and achieves too little.”

- The Pentagon is the only major federal agency that has never passed a financial audit. As the [Defense Spending Reduction Caucus](#) wrote in April: “We cannot justify continuing to increase the Pentagon's

budget when the agency cannot even successfully pass a fiscal audit.” The proposed FY27 budget would be a larger military budget than the next 34 countries combined.

- The offsetting cuts are concrete and severe. The administration’s budget pairs the defense increase with a [\\$73 billion reduction](#) in non-defense discretionary spending, including a 50% cut to the EPA, a 33% cut to State Department and international programs, and cuts to biomedical research, heating assistance, and other domestic programs. This is on top of the Medicaid cuts and clean energy rollbacks already enacted through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The “Golden Dome” missile defense system would receive \$17.5 billion, with nearly all of it inside the ...reconciliation request rather than the base budget. CSIS’s Tom Karako [has described](#) the funding structure as a deliberate “legislative strategy” to advance the program through reconciliation before normal congressional review of its architecture and strategic implications can occur. Even if the parliamentarian permits the basic funding line, surgical challenges to the program’s policy provisions can strip the most consequential mandates and force a public debate over whether a \$1.2 trillion weapons program should be enacted by filibuster bypass.

What Congress Can Do

- **Vote No on the base budget bills** and support amendments to reduce, not increase the Pentagon budget.
- **Use every available procedural tool to slow, shape, strip and block the \$350 billion defense reconciliation package.** Beyond voting no, Members can: **(1) raise Byrd Rule points of order** against non-budgetary provisions — the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group’s creation as a new sub-unified command, industrial-base policy mandates, and other “terms and conditions” provisions are vulnerable to surgical challenge and require [60 votes to retain](#); **(2) use the vote-a-rama to force politically costly amendment votes** — amendments requiring a Pentagon audit prerequisite, stripping Golden Dome funding, restoring the \$73 billion in domestic cuts, and requiring a War Powers Resolution authorization for any Iran war funding; **(3) refuse unanimous consent** on agreements that shorten the 20-hour debate clock or limit amendments; and **(4) publicly commit to a full Byrd Bath challenge**, led by the Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, to deter problematic provisions during drafting.
- **Specifically challenge Golden Dome’s inclusion in reconciliation under the Byrd Rule** since it has no authorizing statute. Golden Dome was created by Executive Order with no authorizing statute; the reconciliation bill would be the first congressional act on the program and therefore there is a strong argument that this provision is Byrdable. Its [CBO-projected \\$1.2 trillion cost over 20 years](#) extends well beyond the 10-year budget window. Its architectural mandates — including the first space-based interceptor system since SDI — produce major non-budgetary policy effects, raising the “merely incidental” test under Section 313(b)(1)(D) of the Congressional Budget Act.
- **Restore the domestic cuts.** Reject the \$73 billion in non-defense discretionary cuts proposed as offsets.