

More funds proposed for immigration fight

[Immigration, from A1] timated that, if enacted, the bill would increase the deficit by at least \$3.3 trillion over the next 10 years.

Here are key elements concerning immigration:

Border wall

■ \$46.5 billion toward fortifying the U.S.-Mexico border wall and interdicting migrant smugglers at sea.

This includes building barrier sections and access roads and installing barrier-related technology such as cameras, lights and sensors. The legislation doesn't reference specific locations. Trump, in his first term, repeatedly vowed that Mexico would pay for the wall. It didn't.

Staffing

■ \$32 billion for immigration enforcement, including staffing of ICE and expanding so-called 287(g) agreements, in which state and local law enforcement agencies partner with federal authorities to deport immigrants.

■ \$7 billion for hiring Border Patrol agents, customs officers at ports of entry, air and marine agents and field support staff; retention bonuses; and vehicles.

■ \$3.3 billion to hire immigration judges and support staff, among other provisions.

Trump has said he wants to hire 10,000 ICE agents, as well as 3,000 Border Patrol agents.

Detention

■ \$45 billion to build and operate immigrant detention facilities and to transport those being deported.

■ \$5 billion for new Customs and Border Protection facilities and improvements to existing facilities and checkpoints. It's unclear how this could affect California or the Border Patrol checkpoint on Interstate 5 near San Onofre.

The bill allows for families to be detained indefinitely, pending a removal decision. Heidi Altman, vice president of policy at the National Immigration Law Center, called that a blatant violation of the so-called Flores settlement agreement, which has been in place since 1977 and limits to 20 days the duration children can legally be detained.



CHRISTIAN TORRES Anadolu

THE UNITED STATES monitors the Juarez-El Paso border with armored vehicles. A proposed bill would increase funding for patrols.

Local assistance

■ \$13.5 billion to reimburse states and local governments for immigration-related costs. These are divided into two pots of funding: \$10 billion for the "state border security reinforcement fund" and the "Bridging Immigration-related Deficits Experienced Nationwide" or BIDEN fund. Both would fund the arrest by local law enforcement of immigrants who unlawfully entered the U.S. and committed any crime.

"You can think of it like a gift for [Texas Gov. Greg] Abbott," Altman said.

Immigration fees

■ A fee of at least \$100 for those seeking asylum, down from a \$1,000 fee outlined in the House bill. Applicants also would pay \$100 every year the application remains pending. This is unprecedented — a fee has never before been imposed on mi-

grants fleeing persecution.

■ At least \$550 (\$275 on renewal) to apply for employment authorization for those with asylum applications, humanitarian parole and temporary protected status. Currently there is no fee for asylum seekers and a \$470 fee for others.

■ At least \$500 for temporary protected status, up from \$50.

The stated fees are minimums — the bill allows for annual increases and, for many, prohibits waivers based on financial need. "The paradox of a fee for an employment authorization document is that you're not allowed to work, but you need to pay for the fee," said Kathleen Bush-Joseph, a policy analyst with the non-partisan Migration Policy Institute.

Altman noted that imposing a yearly fee on asylum seekers for their pending applications punishes people for the U.S. government's

backlogged system, which is out of the applicant's control.

Other sections exclude lawfully present immigrants, such as refugees and those granted asylum, from benefits including Medicare, Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Another provision excludes children from the child tax credit if their parent lacks a Social Security number.

Praise and scorn

Altman, whose organization has closely tracked the immigration aspects of the funding bill, said people can look at the legislation two ways: big picture — as a \$150-billion infusion to supercharge what the Trump administration has already started — or surgically, as a series of policy changes that will not be easy to undo "and make an already corrupt system subject to even fewer safeguards and really go af-

ter people's most basic needs."

Bush-Joseph had a different view. She said the funding reinforces an outdated and inflexible immigration system without fundamentally changing it.

"That's why there's all this money going to the border even though there aren't a lot of people coming now," she said.

Money alone won't change things overnight, Bush-Joseph said. It takes time to hire people and to open detention facilities. Immigration judges will still have a massive backlog of cases. And getting foreign countries to agree to accept more deportees is tricky.

"Arresting and detaining people with private contractors doesn't get you to an agreement from El Salvador to take five more planes per week," she said.

On Thursday, Trump urged Congress to pass the bill quickly, saying it "will be

the single most important piece of border legislation to ever come across the floor of Congress."

Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, one of three Republicans who voted against the bill Tuesday, had called it "reckless spending," writing on X: "I'm all for hiring new people to help secure our borders, but we don't need it to the extent that's in this bill, especially when our border is largely contained."

Across the political aisle, Democrats including California Sen. Alex Padilla have slammed the bill, saying the immigration-related funding increases amount to a substantial policy change.

"You would think that maybe just for a moment, Republicans would take this reconciliation process as an opportunity to do what they said before they wanted to do and modernize our nation's immigration system," Padilla said last month. "But they're not."

President's megabill now returns to House for vote

[Vote, from A1] while creating new eligibility requirements for food stamps and Medicaid, raising barriers to healthcare access that could result in 11.8 million Americans losing coverage by 2034, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The House of Representatives will now have a second vote on a reconciled version of the bill in the coming days. Should it pass, it will go to the president's desk for his signature.

But final approval in the House is not guaranteed. A bloc of fiscal hawks and a handful of Republican lawmakers in districts that rely especially on Medicaid could still sink the vote. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, a New York Democrat, said he expects every member of his caucus will be in attendance to attempt to prevent passage of a bill he called a "disgusting abomination."

The CBO estimates that the Senate version of the bill would add at least \$3.3 trillion to the national debt — \$1 trillion more than the House version — over the next decade, and even more if Congress votes later to remove several expiration dates built into the legislation.

The House Freedom Caucus, which was founded by several GOP lawmakers to advocate for fiscal discipline, had warned Senate Republicans on Monday to make major changes to the bill to "at least be in the ballpark of compliance with the agreed upon House budget framework."

"It's not what we agreed to," the caucus wrote in a statement. "Republicans must do better." After the Senate vote, several members of the bloc criticized its version of the bill for new language on green energy, and Rep. Marlin Stutzman of Indiana said it still included "unacceptable increases to the national debt and the



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SEN. Susan Collins (R-Maine) joined Republican colleagues Rand Paul and Thom Tillis in opposing the bill.

deficit."

Many Republicans voted for the bill with reservations and out of fear of the alternative: Tax cuts affecting millions of American households and businesses passed under Trump in 2017 are set to expire at the end of the year without a congressional extension.

Yet those tax cuts, as well as other tax breaks and incentives for senior citizens and tip workers, are expensive proposals, cutting into federal revenues. To offset a fraction of those costs, Republicans for the first time made funding cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Even still, the CBO and

other independent organizations assessed that the bill will increase borrowing by trillions, at a time when even Wall Street has begun to fear consequences from runaway debt.

Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, said in a statement that the Senate bill would add \$600 billion to the deficit in 2027 alone and push deficits above 7% of gross domestic product.

"The level of blatant disregard we just witnessed for our nation's fiscal condition and budget process is a failure of responsible governing," MacGuineas said. "These are the very same lawmakers who for years have bemoaned the nation's

massive debt, voting to put another \$4 trillion on the credit card."

"The Senate took a bill that already borrowed way too much, and took it from bad to worse," MacGuineas added.

Speaking with reporters after the vote, Murkowski said that the choice was "agonizing," but that she "had to look on balance, because the people in my state are the ones that I put first."

"We do not have a perfect bill by any stretch of the imagination. My hope is that the House is going to look at this and recognize that we're not there yet," she said.

Collins, who is up for reelection in Maine next year, said she supported the bill's provisions extending tax

cuts and benefits.

"My vote against this bill stems primarily from the harmful impact it will have on Medicaid, affecting low-income families and rural healthcare providers like our hospitals and nursing homes," she wrote on X. "The Medicaid program has been an important healthcare safety net for nearly 60 years that has helped people in difficult financial circumstances."

Democrats in the Senate were swift in their condemnation of legislation that they believe will be deeply harmful to Republican prospects in the next election cycle, possibly costing them control of both houses of Congress.

"Every single Senate Re-

publican is going to have to answer for these cruel and unpopular cuts this election," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. "This is putting their majority at serious risk."

Polling shows that Americans broadly support extending the 2017 tax cuts. Other expensive programs in the bill — including additional funding for border security and defense — also enjoy public support. But polls indicate that the public disapproves of the bill overall by a double-digit margin due to its cuts to core government programs.

"Republicans' big ugly bill is one of the most shameful and selfish pieces of legislation I have ever seen," California Sen. Adam Schiff said after the vote. "This bill will result in the closure of hospitals and clinics, kick millions of Americans off of their healthcare, slash food assistance for families, kill thousands of jobs, destroy the future of renewable energy and raise energy bills by hundreds of dollars every year — all to give a massive tax cut to wealthy people and big corporations, and to benefit polluters."

"And if that was not bad enough," Schiff added, "it will skyrocket the national debt and deficit to help pay for tax cuts for the wealthy, leaving our children and grandchildren to pick up the tab. For any of the bill's supporters to claim the mantle of deficit reduction or fiscal responsibility is hypocrisy of the rankest order."

Trump was at an event in Florida when the vote occurred, touring a detention facility for migrants set in the Everglades. The president's megabill also includes a significant increase in funding for border security and defense.

"Oh, thank you," Trump said amid applause when he was told the news of the vote. "I was also wondering how we're doing, because I know this is prime time."