3 Ways to Visualize President Trump’s Border Wall Request

At anywhere from 15 to 30 percent of his net worth—depending on who’s doing the figuring—$1.4 billion is a lot of money, even to President Donald Trump.

That’s how much he’s asked Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) to include in the continuing resolution Congress must pass this week to prevent a government shutdown. Republican leaders, however, have been reluctant to provide any taxpayer funding for the project—despite the obvious national security implications—because Democrats will undoubtedly remind voters the president promised that Mexico would be paying for the wall.

Money is “fungible,” meaning that while Mexico might not directly pay for construction of the wall, if the president is able to work out a deal whereby monies equal to or exceeding the cost of construction of the wall come into the national treasury from Mexican sources, his promise will be kept. But let’s also examine the reality of the president’s request for the continuing resolution.

According to the letter he sent to Ryan, the president will use the $1.4 billion as follows:

- $999 million for planning, design, and construction of the first installment
- $200 million for border security technology deployments
- $179 million for access roads, gates and other tactical infrastructure projects
- $18 million for project management, oversight and support

There are three ways you can look at this “ask” that really put it in its proper perspective as a national public works project. Let’s explore each of them:

1. As a Percentage of Total Government Revenue

The federal government is projected to take in a little more than $3.4 trillion in funds this year. That’s about $10,480 for each man, woman`9 and child in the U.S. The president’s request would be just percent of total.

Or, for every $ the federal government takes in, the president is asking to put one penny into the fund for the first installment of the border wall.

2. As a Percentage of Total Government Spending

The federal government is still spending nearly $600 billion a year more than it takes in. According to the Congressional Budget Office, it’s projected to spend about $4.0 billion this year, even with a “conservative” unified Republican government.

The president’s “big ask” for the border wall is just percent of total spending in the continuing resolution. That would be equivalent to every U.S. department setting aside one penny for every $ it spends to go toward construction of the first installment of the border wall.

3. As a Percentage of Gross National Product

The U.S.’ Gross Domestic Product, the total monetary value of goods produced and services provided in a country during one year, was $18.0 trillion at its most recent measurement. At the current 2-percent growth rate, that will mean a GDP of about $18.4 trillion during the current budget period.

The effect of the “Trump bounce” is likely to be much greater than 2 percent.

That makes the president’s “ask” for the first installment of the border wall about percent of GDP. That would be the

> equivalent of the U.S. economy shelling out one penny for every $125 it produces.

Again, $1.4 billion is a lot of money for anyone. But, spread out over more than 320 million Americans, it’s not as big of an “ask” as some might like to make it out to be—particularly when our national security is at stake.

In fact, we’ve done the math for you. It would be equivalent to each man, woman, and child in the U.S. contributing $ to the project. {eoa}