

President Obama Set to Release His Final Budget

U.S. President Barack Obama unveils his final White House budget on Tuesday with a blueprint for fiscal year 2017 that will lay out his spending proposals for priorities from fighting Islamic State to providing for the poor.

The budget for the fiscal year beginning on Oct. 1 is largely a political document and is unlikely to be passed by the Republican-controlled Congress.

But it gives the Democratic president, who leaves office in January, a chance to make a last pitch for funding on issues such as education, criminal justice reform and job creation.

"That document ... will be President Obama's final vision of how he lays out the fiscal future for the country," said Joel Friedman, vice president for federal fiscal policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

"I don't think anyone expects it to be enacted this year. Republicans aren't going to embrace it, but that doesn't mean it's not going to be a useful document."

Congress can advance elements of the budget without endorsing the entire proposal, which is likely to call for roughly \$4 trillion in total spending, in line with Obama's \$4 trillion proposal for fiscal year 2016.

The budget is likely to stay within the confines of an agreement reached between the White House and Congress last year that lifted mandatory "sequestration" cuts on both defense and domestic spending.

Friedman noted that Obama and Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan agreed on some ways to fight

poverty, such as an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit to encourage low-income Americans to work.

But differences between the two political parties in a presidential election year are especially pronounced, and Republican lawmakers have taken the unusual step of not inviting White House budget director Shaun Donovan to brief about the proposal.

“Maybe they are taking the Donald Trump approach to debates about the budget. They are just not going to show up,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters last week, referring to the Republican presidential front-runner’s decision to skip a debate with his counterparts ahead of the nominating contest in Iowa.

The administration has already released key elements. The Pentagon will ask for more than \$7 billion for the fight against Islamic State, up about 35 percent from the previous year’s request, and Obama will seek a 20 percent boost for renewable energy research funding to a total of \$7.7 billion.

(Additional reporting by Roberta Rampton and Susan Cornwell; Editing by Cynthia Osterman)

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