

The Showdown: Rush Limbaugh and Vice President Pence Went Head-to-Head Tuesday

Having a background in talk radio, Mike Pence is perhaps one of the most media-savvy individuals in the Trump administration, but there's little that can prepare you to go head-to-head with the grand master of talk radio, Rush Limbaugh.

Especially when he's mad at you.

But that's exactly what he did Tuesday afternoon, going toe-to-toe for an entire segment of Limbaugh's three-hour program over the continuing resolution and what he believes was a sellout by Republicans. The vice president, on the other hand, made an equally strong argument for why the bill isn't nearly as bad as some have painted it.

The host pounced on the vice president almost immediately, demanding to know, "If this is what happens, Mr. Vice President, why vote Republican? What is the point of voting Republican if the Democrats are gonna continue to win practically 95 percent of their objectives, such as in this last budget deal?"

The vice president countered:

I think this was actually a clear win for the American people. Look, you've had Washington, D.C., that has been, you know, paralyzed by gridlock and partisan infighting for many years, and in this new president you have someone who was able to bring people together and make a \$21 billion increase in defense spending at a time of great challenge for America's interests around the world. And that's a—you know, he spoke about that today, surrounded by a lot of great

members of the United States Air Force. And it was also a piece for years, Democrats in Washington insisted that any increase in defense spending would be matched with an increase in domestic spending.

So you gotta grow government at home if you're gonna, you know, invest in our national defense. This ended that. I mean, in a very real sense this was a game-changer because we're just back to putting the safety, security, and the national defense of the American people first, and I think it sends, having just traveled around the Asian-Pacific representing the president over the last couple of weeks, I think this sends a decisive message to the world that under President Trump's leadership we're gonna make the strongest military in history even stronger.

Limbaugh was not moved, saying \$15 billion in new defense spending was likely considered a small price to pay by Democrats who are getting a bill that continues to fund refugee resettlement, Planned Parenthood, sanctuary cities and the EPA, but not the southern border wall. He said "Democrats clearly think this is a big win," and they're gaining confidence they can block President Donald Trump's agenda for the remainder of his term.

If the president is willing to shut down the government in October if he doesn't get the budget he's proposed for Fiscal Year 2018, he asked, why not shut it down now? If the Senate needs 60 votes to pass a bill, why not circumvent the Democrats by going through the reconciliation process, which only requires 51?

"The No. 1 priority of President Trump is to rebuild our military, to restore the arsenal of democracy," the vice president said. "And I gotta tell you, to get Democrats in Washington, D.C., to agree to a \$21 billion increase in a short-term budget bill—and, you know, the president's calling

for the largest increase in military spending since the Reagan administration in the upcoming budget, I think is no small—it's no small accomplishment.

“Also, this bill includes the largest increase in border security funding in 10 years, with enough, as the president said to make a down payment on a border wall. We're replacing ineffective and failing fencing and wall with an unbreakable barrier. We're beginning to build the wall already, and look at the statistics, Rush. Illegal immigration, border crossings, are down more than 60 percent—”

Limbaugh interrupted, delving into a liberal mainstream media talking point, the so-called “fear factor.” The vice president was having none of it, though, saying Trump's border security agenda wasn't about “fear,” but rather about leadership.

“You have in Secretary Kelly someone who is acting on the president's direction,” he said. “We are enforcing the laws of this country. We're vigorously removing criminal illegal immigrants from our streets, including these dangerous gang members that are being removed from our major cities. It's all having its effect. But I want to tell you and your listeners, this budget bill includes the single largest increase in border security funding in 10 years.

“Throw in there, Rush, remember, this is an issue you've been a great champion of, educational choice for disadvantaged kids for as long as I've been listening to you, and it's just about as long as you've been on the air, and President Trump insisted here in this bill and got that we're continuing the educational choice program here in our nation's capital, and we're gonna continue to expand educational opportunities for some of our most vulnerable kids. There's a lot in here. This is just a five-month bill. This is a short-term bill that finishes out this year, but I think it demonstrates that, in President Trump's leadership, the American people once again

have a president who can bring together both parties, who can move the ball forward on the priorities of the American people, and when the next budget comes around next fall you'll see even more of President Trump's leadership and priorities reflected."

Limbaugh, still clearly agitated, suggested these were talking points conservatives have been hearing from Republicans for nearly two decades: "We'll get 'em next time."

"Mr. Vice President, we've been told this for 15 years, 'We'll get 'em next time,' after every continuing resolution," he charged. "After every continuing resolution. 'We'll get 'em next time, we'll kick the can down the road, we'll get 'em next time."

And once again, the vice president just wasn't having it. He reasserted once again that the appropriations bill is a big win for the American people.

"No, we got 'em this time," he said. "We got 'em this time—\$21 billion in defense spending at a time—I gotta tell you, I was out there visiting troops in South Korea. I was standing on the deck of the *USS Reagan* in the harbor in Japan. Look, the president has made it clear, his No. 1 priority is national defense and national security. And to say in this very first budget bill, instead of getting gridlock, instead of getting a government shutdown, which Washington's been pretty good at for a while, we actually made process and we're making a significant investment."

When Limbaugh wouldn't back down, the vice president reminded him that it took the president a full hour to recount the administration's accomplishments over the past 100 days, some of which could be derailed if a government shutdown were to occur now. He added that the president is "fighting every single day to advance his agenda," and he is proud to be "standing shoulder to shoulder" with him.

The subject quickly shifted to the American Health Care Act, which Limbaugh noted is where the administration is focusing its efforts to permanently defund Planned Parenthood. That bill is also expected to come up for a vote this week.

The vice president noted that the current bill is the first phase of a three-phase plan to entirely eliminate Obamacare and replace it with a market-driven system that will lower health insurance costs for Americans. The second phase will involve executive action by Secretary of Health & Human Services Dr. Tom Price, while the third will be a subsequent bill from Congress aimed at sweeping away what is left of Obamacare.

Limbaugh noted that the Affordable Care Act placed enormous power in the hands of then-HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. Pence said that same power can be used to wipe it a big chunk of it away, too.

"Secretary Price is already about that now," he said. "We are working diligently around the clock at Health and Human Services to be poised to work with states to give all new flexibility—"

"Yanking a bunch of Obama things out there that Sebelius put in?" Limbaugh interjected.

"Well, I mean the simple fact is that the power that was vested in the secretary of Health and Human Services to implement Obamacare can also be used to unleash the power of a free market," the vice president added. "We'll have to do one more bill, Rush, to sweep away the remaining vestiges and the president's vision to let people buy health insurance across state lines. But this is an enormously important first step toward taking the American people back to a health care system that's based on freedom of choice, freedom to choose your doctor, the free-market principles that you and I know will increase quality and reduce the cost of health care in

America." {eoa}