

This Is Why President Trump Thinks the 'CR' Is a 'Good Deal'

Monday evening, Office of Management & Budget Director Mick Mulvaney briefed the White House press corps on President Donald Trump's take on the continuing resolution currently being considered in Congress to avoid a government shutdown on Friday night.

Calling the "CR" the "Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bill," he said he was glad that Democrats were happy with the bill, but he hit back at the notion that it was somehow a win for liberals and a loss for conservatives. Reminding the press that the process that led to this bill began long before President Trump took office, he asked Americans to think back to September of last year.

He said:

There was some discussion at that time when President Obama was still here about funding the government for the entire fiscal year '17. Can you imagine how different this bill is from what the bill that President Obama would have signed back in September? And it's those differences that I want to talk about today, and those differences that summarize why we think this was a really solid bill for the administration.

What did we get more money for? We got more money for defense. We got more money for border security. We got more money for school choice. Looking around here, many of you were here in March when I came out for the very first time to talk about our budget blueprint. What did we ask for more money for? Defense, border security, school choice.

So everything that we got in this deal yesterday, last night, lines up perfectly with the president's priorities—\$21 billion of new spending for defense. I can—excuse me, I'll put my glasses on—that's \$9 billion to address immediate war-fighting readiness requirements, \$2.5 billion for munitions, war consumables and spare parts; \$1.4 billion to modify existing deployable weapons systems. And you can go on again and again.

We got—we're going to buy more MV-22 helicopters. We're going to buy more Apache attack helicopters. We're going to buy all sorts of stuff this President has indicated we need and General Mattis wants to help rebuild the military. \$21 billion is a huge increase. We had asked for \$30 billion, we got \$21 billion.

By the way, I heard a report today that said it was \$12.5. I don't know if *The Washington Post* is here—I think they were the first to report that. I'm not sure where that number comes from. We sort of dug into it and somebody said, well, it's really only \$15 billion in OCO money, but \$2.5 billion of it is contingent on the administration supplying a strategy to defeat ISIS. We fully expect to be able to satisfy the requirements of the ISIS plan, and we fully expect for that whole \$15 billion in OCO to be delivered.

That's in addition to the \$6 billion that was already underlying DOD approps bill. That's how we get to the \$21 billion. In fact, if you want to—and some outlets reported this—if you want to compare it to the FY '16 levels, year over year, it's a \$25 billion increase over FY '16. So it's a tremendous increase in the defense budget.

As far as border security, yeah, we agreed, I think it was last Monday, to not continue to push for bricks and mortar for the wall. What did we get as part of this deal? We got \$ billion additional dollars, OK? That's not the whole funding for the border security this year, this is just additional

money. And we'll be able to use that on things like maintenance on the existing wall—infrastructure, roads, bridges, gates, technology, lighting—things that will have a material impact on border security this year.

One of the reasons that we agreed to remove the request—to withdraw the request for the time being about bricks and mortar was that this is only a five-month plan. And once we looked our hands over, we realized it was almost impossible, if not impossible, to actually get bricks and mortar on the ground in five months, so why start fighting about it now. Let's focus on thing we can do in this fiscal year, in the next five months, to secure the border. So we thought that was a nice pickup for us.

And then finally, school choice. You've heard the president talk about it, and so often, candidates only talk about school choice during election cycles, because folks who are motivated by school choice really turn out the vote. This president is going to make it part of his first major piece of legislation that he's signing. So when he signs this on Thursday or Friday, whenever they send it down, he's going to have a three-year authorization for the D.C. school choice project, which is a tremendous message to the school choice community that the president is following through on his promises on that.

During the Q&A that followed, Mulvaney also addressed some of the biggest concerns conservatives and evangelical Christians have with the proposed bill: it fails to defund Planned Parenthood and the Obamacare subsidies and fails to provide funding for the president's proposed wall on the southern border with Mexico.

With regard to the latter, he said "a lot can happen" over the next five months as the administration attempts to get the funding in the Fiscal Year 2018 Budget. He also explained how the lack of funding for "bricks and mortar" won't put the

project behind the president's schedule in any way:

Keep in mind, building the border wall is not like building a wall at your house, okay? A lot of this is in very rural areas, hard to get to. So a lot of things we have to do, for example, is build roads to get out to those places, repair roads that are there. Some of those roads go over gullies and washouts, and those bridges have fallen into disrepair. Other places along the wall have fallen into disrepair already. That's a lot of the gate problems that we have. So we would fix all those things anyway as we're working our way to the new areas. So I wouldn't agree with the premise that this sets us back at all. If nothing else, it actually helps us to fast-track where border security would be otherwise.

Keep in mind, different president, you probably don't have any of this work being done. This president, you will.

As to the former, he said:

Let's talk about Planned Parenthood on one hand and then we'll talk about the Obamacare subsidies on the other. In fact, let's deal with the other one first. That was the Democrats' top priority, was to secure the continued Obamacare payments, and the bill doesn't do that. We didn't—the bill does not address the CSR payments. That was a major demand that they gave up. We thought it was appropriate, because we gave up on our primary demand, which was bricks and mortar. So I thought that was the proper functioning of a negotiation. So I've seen in a couple places where some Democrats are saying that the bill covers CSR payments, and it does not.

As to Planned Parenthood, yeah, it does fund that. It absolutely does. And we were concerned about that to begin with and then thought it through and had a chance to talk with some pro-life leaders both on the Hill and then off the

Hill from some of the outside groups. I think everybody came to one realization, which is that if you're serious—if you're a lawmaker serious about voting to defund Planned Parenthood, then your opportunity to do that is in the AHCA, the American Health Care Act, which the House is currently debating right now.

So we decided not to fight the Planned Parenthood battle on this funding bill because it's contained in the AHCA, which we hope to take up this week as well.

Mulvaney also noted that the new CR maintains the previously existing spending cap of \$ trillion. That means it won't add to the national debt beyond what has already been projected under the Obama administration.

Ultimately, the former congressman, who was well-known as a "budget hawk," was asked if he personally would have voted for the CR if he were still in the House of Representatives. He said he would, adding:

I'd be hard-pressed to figure how we could fund more of the priorities. Listen, we didn't get the sanctuary cities—that's fine. It never was—our first four things to ask for, we asked for more money for defense, border security, sanctuary cities and wanted spending reductions. We didn't get any spending reductions, we didn't get sanctuary cities. We got a good bit of border security, we got a big chunk of national defense, OK? So you look at that and say two out of four, but keep in mind what we got at the last minute when the Democrats put Puerto Rico on the table was we got that school choice, which, again, lines up with the president's priorities.

So to my Republican friends, I would say, if you're serious about seeing the president advance his agenda, you should vote for the bill. {eo}