

House Approves Trump Budget Blueprint After Winning Over GOP Holdouts

Conservative critics of the measure said it didn't guarantee deep spending cuts

By Richard Rubin and Olivia Beavers
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WASHINGTON—House Republicans narrowly approved the blueprint for President Trump's "one big, beautiful bill" following a late push by party leaders that won over some holdouts who had worried that the plan doesn't force [deep-enough spending cuts](#).

The 216-214 vote on Thursday marks a major step forward for Trump's legislative agenda, and it notches a much-needed win for the White House after Trump [put some of his tariffs](#) on hold Wednesday. The House's adoption of the measure unlocks a procedural fast track for a bill later this year that would extend expiring tax cuts, lower taxes even further and increase spending for border security and national defense.

Two House Republicans—Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Victoria Spartz of Indiana—joined Democrats in voting against the measure. But the rest of the conference fell in line after a week of tense negotiations, helping the party eke out a win in the narrowly divided chamber. The vote didn't resolve all of the intra-party tensions that will challenge Republicans now, but it gave them continued momentum as they head into a two-week recess and then a busy spring of legislating.

With assists from the administration but not a heavy-handed pressure campaign from the president, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) threaded the needle between hard-liners insistent on spending cuts and moderates worried about changes that could hurt Medicaid beneficiaries. He huddled with hard-right House Freedom Caucus members in an anteroom as the pivotal vote started, then reassured moderate Republicans on the House floor as the tallying ended.

"The America First agenda will be enacted. President Trump's promises will be fulfilled," Johnson said after the vote. "And we're really excited that today we took a big step to getting that done."

Spending cuts on the line

Holdout Republicans [had been wary](#) about backing the plan that came out of the Senate last Saturday, concerned that senators aren't as committed to lowering spending as House members are and worried that they would get backed against a deadline down the road with an unsatisfactory final bill.

Some, such as Rep. Lloyd Smucker (R., Pa.) and Chip Roy (R., Texas), had said that they opposed the Senate plan without changes that guaranteed spending cuts. And as late as Wednesday night, Republicans were considering options that would have altered the fiscal framework and required the Senate to vote again. But moderates blocked that attempt, and House Republicans from all corners of the party accepted leaders' commitments to figure out an answer that satisfies them all in the months ahead. Only Massie and Spartz remained opposed, citing unacceptable budget-deficit increases from the blueprint.

On Thursday morning, Johnson and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R., S.D.) stood side-by-side and said they were aligned on plans to lower spending, trying to provide enough of an assurance about spending cuts in the final bill to get the fiscal framework over the finish line now.

Thune said Thursday that a lot of senators favor cutting at least \$1.5 trillion in spending. That commitment isn't written or binding and doesn't necessarily reflect what a majority of senators will do on the final bill.

"We're certainly going to do everything we can to be as aggressive as possible," Thune said.

That comment and other pledges proved to be enough to get the budget over the finish line. Roy said he voted "reluctantly" for the budget based on statements from Trump, Johnson and Thune that, taken together, amounted to a promise that the eventual package would include significant spending cuts and link them to the size of tax cuts.

"We got commitments on cuts," said Rep. Tim Burchett (R., Tenn.), a conservative holdout.

House Budget Chairman Jodey Arrington (R., Texas) said that Johnson committed that a final bill wouldn't increase the national debt. Arrington and other Republicans have been willing to assume that Trump's agenda will create economic growth, so that a bill officially scored as a deficit increase can be thought of as deficit-neutral.

Bigger fights ahead

Thursday's vote, in many ways, was the easy part for Republicans, because party leaders were able to defer tough choices by telling lawmakers that this was just a process vote and that they could fight for more later when actual legislation is before them.

Republicans will now attempt to write a bill that encompasses much of Trump's legislative agenda, then try to steer it through the House and Senate with no more than three votes to spare in each chamber.

Republicans agree broadly on major planks, such as extending tax cuts from Trump's first term that expire Dec. 31 and providing hundreds of billions of dollars for border security and national defense.

But they are sharply divided on spending cuts, particularly on Medicaid. Conservatives want to add work requirements and reduce the federal share of the expansion that occurred as part of Obamacare. But House moderates and some senators—including Susan Collins (R., Maine), Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska) and Josh Hawley (R., Mo.)—have been pushing back against such changes.

On taxes, Republicans are likely to split over several issues. Blue-state House members want a significant increase in the \$10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions, while others warn that it effectively subsidizes state governments. Some Republicans want to keep clean-energy tax breaks that Democrats expanded in 2022 and that are creating investments in their districts, while others see those tax credits as unnecessary and an obvious target to generate hundreds of billions of dollars.

The budget approved Thursday will provide only a minimal guide for that work ahead. It contains a House plan and Senate plan that don't match each other.

The House plan requires at least \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts over a decade and allows \$4 trillion in tax cuts. If spending cuts go up, the tax cuts can increase.

The Senate plan, meanwhile, locks in just \$4 billion of spending cuts and allows more than \$5 trillion in tax cuts. Senators said they were aiming for far larger spending cuts but wanted to preserve flexibility as they write the bill.

Democrats were united in opposition to the budget, and their comments preview the coming fight over Medicaid and tax cuts.

“Republicans are exploding the national debt to pass their massive tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals and companies in America,” said Rep. Steny Hoyer (D., Md.). “At the same time, this budget threatens the largest cut to Medicaid in history.”

Republicans say they are aiming at Medicaid changes that wouldn’t harm eligible beneficiaries, focusing on work requirements and more frequent eligibility checks, among other ideas.