

Budget Austerity under Trump, Prepares to Slash Federal Budget by \$10.5 Trillion Over Next Decade

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The Trump transition team is developing a federal budget based on a blueprint drawn up by the right-wing Heritage Foundation that will slash \$10.5 trillion from government spending over the next decade, according to a report Thursday in the Hill.

The main budget priorities of the Trump administration are to be published within 45 days of the inauguration and the full budget proposal is expected sometime in April.

According to the *Hill*, the Trump administration's budget proposal is being drawn up by Russ Vought and John Gray, former Heritage Foundation employees and one-time aides to Vice President Mike Pence. Vought was also the executive direction of the Republican Study Group, which has proposed similar cuts in recent years, while Gray served as an aide to Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan when he led the House Budget Committee.

The implementation of the reported budget cuts would mark a massive escalation in the social counterrevolution and attack on the living standards of the working class carried out by the Democrats and the Obama administration over the last eight years.

Among the "dramatic" reductions that are being prepared are significant cuts to funding for the Commerce Department and the Department of Energy, with programs currently under their jurisdiction either eliminated entirely or transferred to other departments.

Other federal departments that will reportedly be significantly impacted by cuts and program elimination include the Department of Transportation, Justice Department and State Department.

Under the Heritage Foundation plan, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which oversees the operations of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR), would be entirely privatized. While the CPB still relies on the federal government for a portion of its funding, it has increasingly relied on donations from large corporate sponsors and from the wealthy.

The Heritage Foundation's budget blueprint is a litany of attacks on benefits and social programs which benefit the poor, as well as an assault on scientific research.

Under the guise of "reducing fraud," the foundation calls for new restrictions on the Earned Income Tax Credit, which benefits millions of single mothers and low-wage workers. Other reactionary measures under consideration are new work requirements for adult Food Stamp recipients and eliminating Social Security payments for disabled children.

Federal funding for the arts and humanities research would be totally phased out with the elimination of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Scientific research carried out across multiple departments, including in the Department of Energy, will be completely or partially defunded.

The savagery of the reported budget proposals is yet another expression of the fundamental class character of the incoming Trump administration, in which billionaire oligarchs are taking direct control of the federal government, rather than pulling the strings from behind the scenes.

Reports of the incoming administration's budget plans came as the Senate held cabinet hearings Thursday for multimillionaire corporate raider and former Goldman Sachs executive Steven Mnuchin, nominated to serve as the Treasury Secretary, and former Texas governor Rick Perry for head of the Department of Energy, an agency which Perry called to eliminate in 2012.

Mnuchin, if confirmed, would join a cabinet comprised of billionaires, multimillionaires and former generals. While Mnuchin has an estimated net worth of \$400 million, that puts him well behind Trump's picks for Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos (\$5.1 billion), Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross (\$2.5 billion), and the Small Business Administration, Linda McMahon (\$1.35 billion).

During his testimony Thursday, Mnuchin defended his time as the head of California-based IndyMac Bank, renamed OneWest, where he made massive profits aggressively pursuing foreclosures against homeowners during the height of the foreclosure crisis.

Mnuchin sought in his remarks to present himself as a savior moved by the plight of homeowners who was hindered in his efforts to help by too many government regulations. "If we had not bought IndyMac," he said, "the bank would likely have been broken up and sold in pieces to private investors, where the outcome for consumers could have been much bleaker." (And Mnuchin just happened to make millions in the process!)

He promised that if confirmed as Treasury Secretary, he would work to eliminate financial regulations that had kept him from becoming even wealthier. Mnuchin will also be taking the lead in formulating Trump's tax plan, which is to include cutting the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to only 15 percent.

Demonstrating the practically nonexistent character of the vetting process for Trump's ultra-wealthy nominees, the *Washington Post* reported Thursday that Mnuchin had failed to report his corporate interests in the Cayman Islands as well as more than \$100 million in real estate and art holdings in an initial submission to the Senate panel reviewing his nomination. Though this lapse drew some flak from committee Democrats, it did little to hurt the former Goldman Sachs executive's chances of confirmation by the Republican-controlled Senate.

While some of Trump's nominees may take their time to get through the confirmation process, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer announced Thursday that a deal had been reached to approve retired Marine Corps Gen. James "Mad Dog" Mattis as Pentagon chief and retired Marine Corps Gen. John F. Kelly as head of the Department of Homeland Security shortly after Trump's inauguration today.

"I looked at their records...and I think they'd be very good," Schumer noted approvingly. He also indicated that Republican Representative Mike Pompeo would be confirmed as CIA director either today or on Monday.

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