

CARES Act and COVID-19 FAQ
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Merry Christmas, Here's How Congress Is about to Waste Your Money

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Op-Ed: Rick Scott

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Remember Nancy Pelosi's famous words about Obamacare? "We have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it."

That was nine years ago, but the sad reality of Washington is that we do this all the time. This week, Congress is set to vote on a giant spending package — 2,313 pages long — that was just released, was negotiated in secret, spends \$1.4 trillion, and is chock full of member projects and special-interest giveaways.

To put that number in context: Without any opportunity to read the bill, Congress will vote to spend more than \$4,200 for every man, woman, and child in America. That's on top of the \$23 trillion in debt we've already accumulated, not to mention that the federal government is already running a trillion-dollar deficit, every year.

For years, Republicans fought against wasteful spending under the Obama administration. My party (rightly) argued that our debt and deficits were unsustainable, that we were leaving a burden that future generations simply couldn't afford. At some point, the bill will come due.

Unfortunately, after regaining control of Congress, my party has shown an almost equal disregard for the dangers of our growing national debt and annual deficits as have the Democrats. Sure, you can argue that, in order to prevent a government shutdown, we have to work with Nancy Pelosi and House and Senate Democrats to get an agreement. But I look at these spending bills and wonder, How would they be different if Nancy Pelosi sat in her office and wrote them by herself? She's driving this train, making sure Democratic priorities are funded, and we're letting her.

Let me give you some examples.

This package includes \$25 million for the "operation, maintenance, and security" of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

It includes a \$7.25 million increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the largest increase in a decade.

These spending increases might be nice to have, but we are \$23 trillion in debt. We need to make some tough choices.

It includes more than \$1 billion in new foreign-aid funding without any discussion about what we're getting for this funding.

It repeals three Obamacare taxes, with a cost of approximately \$400 billion over ten years — the medical-device tax, the sales tax on health insurance, and the Cadillac tax. While I'm all for cutting these taxes, there's never even been a discussion about whether we should also repeal the spending that these taxes were supposed to pay for. That's Washington in a nutshell.

This package also includes dozens of what are called “tax extenders.” These are tax-related provisions that expire at the end of the year. Rather than debate the merits of extending them through the normal committee process, big companies and their high-priced lobbyists push to get them thrown into this end-of-the-year spending package, knowing that most of Congress will never even read the bills.

There’s a railroad-track-maintenance credit, a biodiesel and renewable diesel credit, an alternative-fuel refueling-property credit, a production credit for Indian coal facilities, a two-wheeled plug-in electric-vehicle credit, and tax benefits for qualified fuel-cell motor vehicles and nonbusiness energy properties, among many, many others.

And let’s not forget. This bill spends \$1.4 trillion, with no cuts or reforms.

This is not how Washington is supposed to work.

The average American holds Congress in low regard, and after one year in the Senate, I’ve learned just how well-earned that disdain is.

I have a few simple solutions to make Washington work more like the real world, including term limits, a line-item veto, and ending automatic congressional pay raises.

But one simple idea that we can get done right now is No Budget, No Pay. If Congress can’t pass a budget and appropriations bills in a timely and orderly fashion, members of Congress shouldn’t get a paycheck. You don’t get paid if you don’t do your job. Why should Congress?

It’s time to stop the madness. How many more trillions of dollars do we need to spend before we wake up to the danger of our national debt?

We need to reform the way Washington works, and we need to do it now.

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