

\$1.4 trillion spending bill wins Senate OK

By ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a \$1.4 trillion government spending package Thursday in a last bipartisan burst of legislating before bolting for the holidays from a Capitol riven by impeachment.

Lawmakers cleared the two-bill package in a set of votes, sending it to President Donald Trump in time to forestall a possible government shutdown this weekend. The White House said Trump would sign it before Friday's midnight deadline.

The first measure, covering domestic programs, passed by a 71-23 vote. A Pentagon and homeland security measure passed hours later in an 81-11 vote that was the last Senate tally for the year.

The legislation delivers Trump a victory on his U.S.-Mexico border fence and gives Democrats long-sought domestic spending increases and a repeal of Obama-era taxes on high-cost health insurance plans. It blends spending increases for both sides — reelection fodder for lawmakers — with tax and benefit additions that will mean a roughly \$400 billion boost to the deficit over 10 years.

The split-their-differences legislation was carrying a large number of unrelated provisions into law, drawing protests from fiscal conservatives. It would put in place an earlier spending deal that reversed unpopular and unworkable automatic spending cuts to defense and domestic programs — at a \$1.6 trillion or so cost over the coming decade.

“These spending bills are a fiscal dumpster fire,” said Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah. “This is embarrassing.”

Key provisions include an expensive repeal of Obama-era taxes on high-cost health plans, help for retired coal miners, and an increase from 18 to 21 in the nationwide legal age to buy tobacco products. The tobacco measure was pushed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

The almost 2,400-page package reflects the reality of divided government and the enduring strength of the Capitol's appropriations process, which allows lawmakers to go to bat for their states and congressional districts.

McConnell emerged as a victor, winning the politically popular \$6 billion pension rescue for about 100,000 retired coal miners, along with more parochial items such as help for his state's legal hemp industry and \$410 million to build a new veterans hospital in Louisville.

GOP Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama, the Senate Appropriations Committee chairman, secured many items for his state, including a \$378 million harbor dredging program. It's expected to deliver the lions share to a Shelby-backed initiative to deepen Mobile



Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP Photo

President Donald Trump is expected to sign a \$1.4 trillion government spending package.

Harbor to accommodate larger cargo ships.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., was also a driving force, winning permanent repeal of a tax on high-cost “Cadillac” health insurance benefits that is unpopular with Democratic labor allies.

After months of negotiation, leading lawmakers cut a deal on Monday that gives Trump a steady stream of money for the border wall.

“I would have preferred no funding for the wall,” said Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee. “But the Republicans were clear. ... They stood with the president on the wall, as they seem to do time after time.”

times that amount. That's a blow for liberal opponents of the wall but an acceptable trade-off for Democrats who wanted to gain \$27 billion in increases for domestic programs.

But the Democratic concession angered some Hispanic lawmakers. They lashed out at the head of the House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., rather than Pelosi.

“I told (Lowey) we don't appreciate that we're going to get thrown under the bus so she can pass this omnibus and she did exactly that,” said Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz.

The trade-off for the wall money was Trump's signature on the broader package, which increases spending

momentum for more stringent anti-vaping legislation backed by House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, D-N.J., who was one of only seven Democrats to oppose the domestic spending half of the two-bill package.

Approached in the Capitol on Thursday, a deflated-sounding Pallone declined to comment on his opposition to the bill.

For the first time in two decades, the bill would provide money for federal research on gun safety. That's a major legislative victory for Democrats, gun control supporters and researchers who have pushed to study gun violence in the same way scientists look at opioid overdoses and other public health crises. A law adopted in the 1990s has effectively blocked such research and prohibits federal agencies from engaging in advocacy on gun-related issues.

The bill provides \$25 million for gun violence research, divided evenly between the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Business groups praised a seven-year extension of the charter of the Export-Import Bank, which helps finance transactions benefiting U.S. exporters, as well as a renewal of the government's terrorism risk insurance program. The financially troubled government flood insurance program would be extended through September, as would several visa programs for both skilled and seasonal workers.

Most provisions enjoyed bipartisan support, including increases for medical research, combating the opioid epidemic, Head Start and child care grants to states.

Democrats also secured \$425 million for states to upgrade their election systems, and they boosted the U.S. Census budget \$1.4 billion above Trump's request.

They won smaller increases for the Environmental Protection Agency, renewable energy programs and affordable housing.

Washington state lawmaker accused of domestic terrorism

Took part in Malheur wildlife refuge occupation

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — A right-wing Washington state lawmaker vowed that he will not resign despite a damning report that says he took part in “domestic terrorism” against the United States.

The report, which was prepared by an outside investigator for the Legislature and released Thursday, said Rep. Matt Shea traveled throughout the West in recent years meeting with far-right extremist groups and participating and even organizing anti-government activities. The Republican from the city of Spokane Valley was kicked out of the House GOP caucus late Thursday and there have been calls for his resignation from both major parties.

“Like we are seeing with our President this is a sham investigation meant to silence those of us who stand up against attempts to disarm and destroy our great country,” Shea wrote on Facebook late Thursday. “I will not back down, I will not give in, I will not resign. Stand strong fellow Patriots.”

If Shea does not resign, it would take a two-thirds vote in the state House to expel him from office. Democrats have the majority, but would need some Republicans to vote for it as well. The only legislator ever expelled from the Legislature in Washington state was Nelson Robinson, ousted in 1933 for sexually abusing a girl.

The findings of the 108-page report have been forwarded to the FBI and the U.S. attorney for eastern Washington.

The report found that Shea had trained young people to fight a “holy war,” condoned intimidating opponents and promoted militia training by the Patriot Movement for possible armed conflict with law enforcement.

Shea has complained that he was denied any opportunity to review and respond to the report. The report noted Shea declined to be interviewed as part of the probe.

The investigative team, headed by a former FBI agent and a former law enforcement officer, was hired in July.

Investigators obtained evidence that Representative Shea planned, engaged in, and promoted a total of three armed conflicts of political violence against the United States ... in three states outside the State of Washington over a three-year period

to include 2014, 2015 and 2016,” the report said.

The report said Shea “participated in an act of domestic terrorism” when in 2016 he visited the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon to support its armed occupation by two sons of rancher Cliven Bundy.

Shea “engaged in conversations with Ammon Bundy and other militia members in the planning and preparation of the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns, Oregon,” the report said. He also issued a press release on Dec. 11, 2015, asking for patriot and militia groups near the takeover to rally against the U.S. government, according to the report.

After the occupation of the wildlife refuge ended,

Shea posted on his Facebook page: “After much prayer, I'm afraid violence might be necessary to take our country back,” the report said.



Matt Shea

Shea also went to Cliven Bundy's Nevada ranch in 2014 during a standoff with FBI agents in a dispute over grazing rights. And in 2015, in Priest River, Idaho, Shea resisted when authorities planned to remove firearms from the home of an aged military veteran who was not eligible to have them.

The report also said that Shea in 2012 engaged in intimidation when he posted a photo of himself on his Facebook page standing in front of a political opponent's home, and refused to remove the photo despite requests from his adversary, GOP officials and law enforcement.

Shea has also pursued creation of a 51st state in eastern Washington that would be called Liberty and run on biblical principles.

The Army veteran hosts a weekly show on the American Christian Network and in 2017 complimented members of Team Rugged, a group that one member said provides special-forces-type gun training for young men so they can be effective in Christian warfare.

Shea last year lost a House leadership position after acknowledging he distributed the “biblical basis for war” document that also calls for killing non-Christian males who refuse to follow fundamentalist biblical law.

Despite the controversies, Shea is popular in his very conservative district and was reelected in 2018 with 58% of the vote.

But he has already drawn a Democratic challenger for the 2020 election.

“We must put our community's safety and our future over party loyalty,” Democrat Lori Feagan said Thursday.

‘THESE SPENDING BILLS ARE A FISCAL DUMPSTER FIRE. THIS IS EMBARRASSING.’

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah

The bill also offered business-friendly provisions on export financing, flood insurance and immigrant workers. A tax on medical devices and health insurance plans would be repealed permanently.

The core of the spending bill is formed by the 12 annual agency appropriations bills passed by Congress each year. It fills in the details of a bipartisan framework from July that delivered about \$100 billion in agency spending increases over the coming two years instead of automatic spending cuts.

The bill exceeds Trump's budget requests in virtually every domestic category, except for Trump's request for \$8 billion-plus for the U.S.-Mexico wall. It was cut back to \$1.4 billion, equal to last year's appropriation. The measure preserves Trump's ability to use his budget powers to tap other accounts for several

across the almost one-third of the budget that's passed by Congress each year. Popular bipartisan programs such as health research, veterans medical care, NASA, Space Force, sewer and water projects, and law enforcement grants to states and local governments would get increases. The \$738 billion Pentagon budget is a record, with increases for procurement of expensive weapons systems like the F-35 fighter.

The increase in the tobacco purchasing age to 21 also applies to e-cigarettes and vaping devices. Aides familiar with the talks said Pelosi agreed to the tobacco legislation as she also won help for unionized carpenters with lower drug costs under their health plans.

Anti-smoking activists were irate at the tobacco provision, saying it doesn't go far enough because it failed to ban flavored vaping products popular with teenagers. It also threatens to kill

SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
49 38 Cloudy, a little rain	47 37 A shower in spots	48 35 Chance of a shower	47 37 A passing shower	48 37 A couple of showers	47 36 Showers possible	48 35 Cloudy



ALMANAC

Astoria through Thursday

Temperatures

High/low	54/42
Normal high/low	48/36
Record high	61 in 1981
Record low	17 in 1924

Precipitation

Thursday	1.60"
Month to date	5.12"
Normal month to date	6.15"
Year to date	46.07"
Normal year to date	63.52"

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2019

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Orion's Belt stands almost straight up from the horizon.

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:55 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:32 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:37 a.m.
Moonset today	1:55 p.m.

	New	First	Full	Last
Dec 25				
Jan 2				
Jan 10				
Jan 17				

TODAY'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
8:51 a.m.	8.8	2:31 a.m.	1.8	
9:41 p.m.	6.7	3:44 p.m.	1.8	
Cape Disappointment				
8:31 a.m.	8.4	1:40 a.m.	1.0	
9:27 p.m.	6.3	3:05 p.m.	0.9	
Hammond				
9:31 p.m.	7.0	3:18 p.m.	1.0	
Warrenton				
8:46 a.m.	9.2	2:15 a.m.	1.9	
9:36 p.m.	7.1	3:28 p.m.	1.1	
Knappa				
9:28 a.m.	9.0	3:32 a.m.	1.5	
10:18 p.m.	7.0	4:45 p.m.	0.8	
Depoe Bay				
7:45 a.m.	8.9	1:07 a.m.	2.0	
8:40 p.m.	6.5	2:34 p.m.	1.1	

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	50/42/c	50/46/r
Boston	35/30/c	44/33/s
Chicago	43/31/s	46/33/pc
Dallas	52/35/pc	58/36/s
Denver	58/34/s	60/37/pc
Honolulu	78/73/c	80/72/c
Houston	57/42/c	64/42/s
Los Angeles	72/51/pc	64/51/sh
Miami	79/72/pc	79/67/r
New York City	34/28/pc	46/35/pc
Phoenix	71/45/pc	72/50/pc
San Francisco	61/50/pc	57/45/sh
Wash., DC	42/29/pc	48/34/pc

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice.

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