

Trump Budget to Take Ax to ‘Radical’ Safety Net Programs

A draft document outlines steep cuts or the elimination of funding for programs that provide child care, housing assistance, foreign aid and health research.



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The Trump administration, which has made clear that it aims to slash government spending, is preparing to unveil a budget proposal as soon as next week that includes draconian cuts that would entirely eliminate some federal programs and fray the nation’s social safety net.

The proposed budget for the 2026 fiscal year would cut billions of dollars from programs that support child care, health research, education, housing assistance, community development and the elderly, according to preliminary documents reviewed by The New York Times. The proposal, which is being finalized by the White House’s Office of Management and Budget, also targets longstanding initiatives that have been prized by Democrats and that Republicans view as “woke” or wasteful spending.

Technically, the president’s blueprint is merely a formal recommendation to Congress, which must ultimately adopt any changes to spending. The full extent of President Trump’s proposed cuts for 2026 is not yet clear. Rachel Cauley, a

spokeswoman for the Office of Management and Budget, said in a statement that “no final funding decisions have been made.”

But early indications suggest the budget will aim to formalize Mr. Trump’s disruptive reorganization of the federal government. That process — largely overseen by the tech billionaire Elon Musk — has frozen billions of dollars in aid, shuttered some programs and dismissed thousands of workers from their jobs, prompting numerous court challenges.

The early blueprint reflects Mr. Trump’s long-held belief that some federal antipoverty programs are unnecessary or rife with waste, fraud and abuse. And it echoes many of the ideas espoused by his budget director, Russell T. Vought, a key architect of Project 2025 who subscribes to the view that the president has expansive powers to ignore Congress and cancel spending viewed as “woke and weaponized.” He previously endorsed some of the cuts to housing, education and other programs that Mr. Trump is expected to unveil in the coming days.

The White House is expected to release the budget as soon as next week, according to two people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the highly secretive process. The president is expected to couple his blueprint for 2026 with a second measure — also set for release next week — that would slash more than \$9 billion in previously approved spending for the current fiscal year, including money that funds PBS and NPR.

In total, the proposed cuts are likely to inform Republican lawmakers as they look for ways to fund their economic agenda, including a package that would extend and expand a set of tax cuts enacted during Mr. Trump’s first term. Their ambitions are projected to cost trillions of dollars, though Republican leaders have explored whether to invoke a budget accounting trick to make it seem as though their tax package does not add considerably to the federal debt.

In an interview with Time published on Friday, Mr. Trump suggested that he liked the idea of making millionaires pay higher taxes to help offset tax cuts for others but also said it would be politically untenable.

Some of the cuts the administration is envisioning could exacerbate the federal deficit. The White House is looking to reduce about \$2.5 billion from the budget of the Internal Revenue Service with the goal of ending the Biden administration's "weaponization of I.R.S. enforcement," which it said targeted conservatives and small businesses. Budget scorekeepers have previously said that cuts to the I.R.S. would reduce the amount of revenue coming into the government, since it would make it harder for the tax collector to go after businesses and people who owe money but do not pay.

In many cases, the draft budget slashes many federal antipoverty programs, generally by cutting their funds and consolidating them into grants sent to the states to manage. The full extent of those changes is not clear, but the result could be fewer programs and dollars serving low-income Americans, who may be at risk of losing some benefits.

Among the most prominent programs that could be eliminated is Head Start, which provides early education and child care for some of the nation's poorest children.

Documents reviewed by The Times show the White House is considering a \$12.2 billion cut, which would wipe out the program. The budget document says Head Start uses a "radical" curriculum and gives preference to illegal immigrants. A description of the program also criticizes it for diversity, equity and inclusion programming and the use of resources that encourage toddlers to welcome children and families with different sexual orientations.

Despite the Trump administration's pledge to make housing more affordable, the budget draft would reduce funding for several programs that support housing developments or provide rental assistance. The budget proposes saving \$22 billion by replacing the Department of Housing and Urban Development's rental assistance programs with a state-based initiative that would have a two-year cap on rent subsidies for healthy adults.

The draft budget also eliminates the Home Investment Partnerships Program, cutting the \$1.25 billion fund that provides grants to states and cities for urban development projects on the basis that it is "duplicative" of other federal housing

programs. It also cuts the \$644 million housing block grant programs for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, saying that these would be unnecessary because of new, unspecified initiatives such as enhanced “opportunity zones” that would give states greater incentives to provide affordable housing.

The overhaul of the nation’s health research apparatus, a few years after the coronavirus pandemic killed millions of people around the world, could also be drastic, with about \$40 billion in proposed cuts to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The draft budget recommends cutting \$8.8 billion from the National Institutes of Health, which it declared has “broken the trust of the American people with wasteful spending, misleading information, risky research and the promotion of dangerous ideologies that undermine public health.”

The proposal would consolidate and shrink some of the agency’s core functions that focus on chronic diseases and epidemics. It would entirely eliminate funding for some divisions, such as the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, which would lose the \$534 million that it currently receives.

The budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would be almost halved, to \$5.2 billion from \$9.2 billion. Associated programs such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response would be eliminated. A note in the preliminary document refers to overdose prevention funding by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as the “Biden crack pipe.”

Although Mr. Trump has said he prioritizes “law and order” in his presidency, his budget proposes about \$2 billion of combined cuts to the F.B.I., the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The D.E.A. cuts would scale back international counternarcotics efforts in European countries that are equipped to crack down on drug trafficking. The A.T.F. cuts would eliminate offices at the agency that the Trump administration says have “criminalized law-abiding gun ownership through regulatory fiat.”

The proposal said the goal was to invest in getting F.B.I. agents into the field and to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs at the bureau that were “pet projects” of the Biden administration.

“Importantly, this administration is committed to undoing the weaponization of the F.B.I. that pervaded during the previous administration, which included targeting peaceful, pro-life protesters, concerned parents at school board meetings and citizens opposed to radical transgender ideology,” said the note explaining the proposed cuts.

As part of Mr. Trump’s “America First” approach, the budget draft calls for more than \$16 billion in combined cuts for economic and disaster support for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia, as well as humanitarian and refugee assistance and U.S.A.I.D. operations.

“To ensure every tax dollar spent puts America First, all foreign assistance is paused,” the draft budget document said. “To be clear, this is not a withdrawal from the world.”

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