

## It's Time to Put People Over the Pentagon

### Rein in Pentagon Spending to Address Real Security Threats

The U.S. spends [more on its military than the next nine countries combined](#),<sup>1</sup> yet the Biden administration's request for fiscal year 2023 was a staggering \$813 billion. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees even moved to add \$45 billion and \$37 billion extra, respectfully – with the House recently cementing their increase. These budgets were called for despite the Defense Department failing its fourth consecutive audit last December. Congress should reject these increases to the Pentagon's already bloated budget and seek cuts to top-line spending. It is time that legislators reevaluate what threats their constituents truly face.

Even as we experience a historic pandemic, vast racial inequality, a growing economic crisis, an expanding climate crisis, and more, we continue to allocate over half the U.S. discretionary budget to the military – which cannot navigate these challenges. Meanwhile, these massive military budgets eat up funding for critical programs here at home, which overwhelmingly takes a greater toll on communities of color and marginalized groups. Now more than ever, we need spending to prioritize people, not the defense industry.

### Americans Want Money in Human Needs, Not the Pentagon

- A [Data for Progress survey](#)<sup>2</sup> done in May 2022 showed that **63% of voters oppose a Congressional increase in military spending** above Biden's budget request. Additionally, 55% of voters report they are "somewhat concerned" or "very concerned" about the current \$813 billion proposal.
- The same survey showed that 83% of Democratic voters say Pentagon spending should not exceed current levels, versus 8% who say it should be higher. When informed about how much the military is poised to receive, **as compared to other agencies**, 51% of Republican voters say the military budget should not be raised further, versus 37% who think too little is spent.
- In January 2022, a [YouGov poll](#)<sup>3</sup> found that 56% of U.S. adults support cutting Pentagon spending, and **reinvesting those funds** in domestic priorities like pandemic recovery, health care, and jobs.
- The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute [found similar stances](#)<sup>4</sup> in a November 2021 survey. When Americans were asked what the highest priority for increased funding should be, **the military ranked last as a priority** at 11%, behind healthcare (23%), border security (17%), education (15%), and infrastructure (14%).

### Pentagon Spending is Not an Effective Job Creator

While some jobs are tied to the military-industrial complex, studies show it is nowhere near the best investment for job returns, particularly manufacturing and blue-collar jobs. Investment in other priorities creates more jobs across all pay ranges in comparison.

- Over half the taxpayer dollars funding the defense budget go to [private contractors](#)<sup>5</sup>, "many of whom are redundant, performing tasks that overlap or that can be done more cheaply by civilian government personnel." Additionally, of the billions going to groups like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, etc., much of the money goes to executives instead of the workers on the ground. In 2019, the salaries of just six of the CEOs of top weapons makers were over \$100 million.
- [A study carried out by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst](#)<sup>6</sup> asserts that "spending on the military is a relatively poor source of job creation." They found spending on clean energy, infrastructure, or education would create **one and a half to two times as many jobs per dollar spent as Pentagon jobs do**. Specifically, "\$1 billion in spending on the military will generate about 11,200 jobs. By contrast, the employment effects of spending in alternative areas will be...16,800 for the green economy, 17,200 for health care, and 26,700 for education. That is, investments in the green economy, health care and

education will produce...more jobs than if the same amount of money were spent by the Pentagon.”

- More [recent findings by Heidi Garrett-Peltier](#),<sup>7</sup> an economist with Brown University’s Cost of War Project, demonstrate a continuation of these patterns. She concludes that “[i]ncluding both direct and indirect jobs, the military creates 6.9 jobs per \$1 million, while the clean energy industry and infrastructure each support 9.8 jobs, healthcare supports 14.3, and education supports 15.2.”
- Garrett-Peltier also calculated that the money spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could have created a net increase of 1.4 - 3 million jobs had it been invested in other sectors of the economy.
- Investing in clean energy, health care, education, and infrastructure would not only create more jobs than in the military industrial complex, and it would also address some of the biggest domestic concerns U.S. voters carry.

## Saving On the Pentagon Can Fund a Lot

Representatives Barbara Lee and Mark Pocan are seeking to cut \$100 billion from the proposed Pentagon budget. Adding in the extra \$45 billion proposed by Congress creates **\$145 billion in savings** that could be redirected toward the following for the year:

- 4.65 million \$15/hour jobs (\$31,200 annually)
- 2.38 million elementary school teacher jobs (\$60,940 median salary)
- 4.04 million preschool teacher jobs (\$35,840 average salary)
- 1.87 million registered nurse jobs (\$77,600 median salary)
- Repairing all U.S. bridges with \$20 billion to spare ([\\$125 billion cost estimate](#)<sup>8</sup> from the American Society of Civil Engineers)
- Replacing all U.S. lead water pipes almost 2.5 times over ([\\$60 billion high-end cost estimate](#)<sup>9</sup> from the American Water Works Association)

## Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **In the House, cosponsor the *People Over Pentagon Act of 2022*, [H.R.8040](#), introduced by Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Mark Pocan (D-WI) to cut \$100 billion from the 2023 Pentagon budget excluding personnel and the Defense Health program. In the Senate, introduce and support a similar effort.**
- **Vote no on any post-conference NDAA** that does not cut the topline.

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1 *The United States Spends More on Defense than the Next 9 Countries Combiner*, Peter G. Peterson Foundation, June 1, 2022

2 Robert Weissman, *Americans Widely Reject Proposals for More Pentagon Spending — So Should Congress*, Data for Progress, June 7, 2022

3 Hallowell, Beth, *Most U.S. adults support Pentagon spending cuts*, AFSC, February 11, 2022

4 *Reagan National Defense Survey*, Ronald Reagan Institute, November 2021

5 Hartung, William D, *Pentagon Spending Is a Poor Job Creator*, The Nation, March 22, 2019

6 Pollin, Robert and Heidi Garrett-Peltier, *The U.S. Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: 2011 Update*, Political Economy Research Institute at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, December 2011

7 Garrett-Peltier, Heidi, *War Spending and Lost Opportunities*, Brown University, 2019

8 Baldwin, Shawn, *Why U.S. bridges are in such bad shape*, CNBC, March 17, 2022

9 Lederman, Josh, *White House unveils plan to replace every lead pipe in the U.S.*, NBC News, December 16, 2021