

# House panel OKs cuts to education, boosts medical research

June 24 2015, by Andrew Taylor

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Republicans controlling the powerful House Appropriations panel Wednesday adopted a sweeping spending bill that seeks to protect popular programs like health research, drug treatment and AIDS prevention but slashes education grants and funding for family planning centers and community service programs.

The sprawling \$153 billion measure, approved by a party-line vote, is at the center of a battle in Washington over how to respond to the return of automatic spending cuts known as sequestration. Republicans controlling Congress have moved to exempt the Pentagon from sequestration by using an accounting loophole to add almost \$40 billion to its budget. Obama is demanding equal increases for domestic programs as a condition for signing any of the appropriations bills.

The GOP bill would provide almost \$15 billion less than requested by President Barack Obama for the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and cuts almost \$4 billion from current levels.

The measure also seeks to block implementation of Obama's [health care law](#) and cuts funding for anti-smoking programs by more than half. It would eliminate a \$286 million family planning program and slash a teen pregnancy prevention program while requiring half of the remaining funding, just \$20 million, be directed to abstinence-only programs.

But chief bill author Tom Cole, R-Okla., would award the National

Institutes of Health, responsible for research into cutting-edge cures, a \$1.1 billion increase, or almost 4 percent. He also maintains funding for the Centers for Disease Control, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and child care block grants but offers modest new initiatives targeted to education for preschoolers, minorities and the disabled.

Cole called the measure "a responsible bill that provides for increases in funding to advance biomedical research, protect public health and ensure quality education services for those most in need."

Democrats mounted a futile daylong assault on the measure.

"The bill is an affront to women, families and all hardworking Americans. It would backtrack on federal efforts to improve schools and help teachers, undermine public health and place Americans' financial security at risk," said top panel Democrat Nita Lowey of New York.

Obama has threatened to veto the measure but it's sure to stall on Capitol Hill before it comes to that point. Senate Democrats filibustered a massive Pentagon funding bill earlier this month in hopes of drawing Republicans to the bargaining table, but any talks seem to be months away.

Wednesday's panel vote was the first in six years on the measure, which has been too controversial to advance on its own. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers, R-Ky., said it's his goal to bring the bill to a floor vote in July.

At Wednesday's session, the GOP-led panel rejected Democratic amendments to add funding for various programs, eliminate the requirement for abstinence-only teen pregnancy programs, and remove a longstanding provision that has been interpreted to block the Centers for Disease Control from conducting research into studying the causes of

gun violence.

Companion legislation faces a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday.

The measure also would:

—Block proposed dietary guidelines that urge Americans to consider the environment when deciding what foods to eat.

—Cut CDC's tobacco prevention program from \$216 million to \$105 million.

—Freeze spending for helping the poor pay their heating bills at \$3.4 billion.

—Provide \$14.4 billion for Title I grants to disadvantaged school districts, a slight increase.

—Appropriate \$12 billion for special education programs at local school districts, \$502 million more than current funding.

—Cut community service programs by about one-third.

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