

America's \$886 Billion Military Budget. No Money for Student Loans and Poverty Alleviation

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Rep. Ro Khanna on Wednesday was the only member of the House Armed Services Committee to vote against legislation that would authorize an \$886 billion military budget for the coming fiscal year, a sum the California Democrat decried as outrageous amid [cuts](#) to social spending and [attacks on aid programs](#) for vulnerable Americans.

"I was proud to cast the lone NO vote against a defense budget nearing \$1 trillion while we are cutting relief for the poor, for students with loans, and for the working class," Khanna wrote on Twitter. "The Beltway is not with me, but many Americans—particularly the young—want us to improve their lives."

The 58-1 vote on the House committee's version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) came after a marathon markup session replete with Republican hysteria over Pentagon [diversity programs](#) and [funding for drag shows](#), which the Defense Department has [already banned](#).

But in a tweet following the committee vote, which sends the NDAA to the full House for consideration, Khanna focused his attention on the [massive costs](#) of price gouging by private military contractors and other abuses.

"How is it that '60 Minutes' has done better oversight of the Pentagon and found more waste and fraud than our Congressional committees tasked with that very responsibility?" Khanna asked, referring to a recent *CBS News* investigation detailing rampant profiteering by some of the world's largest military contractors, including Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.

That's a wrap on House Armed Services Committee's markup of the [#FY24NDAA](#). The committee approves the bill in a 58-1 blowout.

(Dem Ro Khanna is the only member voting against the bill.)
pic.twitter.com/YLD9Mmn8B0

— Connor O'Brien (@connorobrienNH) [June 22, 2023](#)

Last year, [nearly three-quarters](#) of Lockheed Martin's net sales were from the U.S. government. The weapon manufacturer's CEO recently [welcomed](#) the proposed \$886 billion military spending topline in the recently approved [debt ceiling](#) agreement, calling it "as good an outcome as our industry or our company could ask for at this point."

Lockheed and other major military contractors spend big on lobbying and campaign contributions each year, often targeting key congressional panels such as the House Armed Services Committee.

During the 2022 election cycle, according to OpenSecrets, the military sector donated millions to the 59 members of the panel. **Rep. Mike Rogers** (R-Ala.), the chair of the committee, [received the most](#) from the sector last year at \$517,700.

"Pentagon contractors consistently contribute heavily to House Armed Services Committee members, Senate counterparts, and appropriations committee members in both chambers," OpenSecrets found. "The top 20 House Armed Services Committee members received almost \$2.3 million from the defense sector, and 12 of those members serve in leadership roles on the committee or related subcommittees."

Eric Eikenberry, government relations director at Win Without War, said in a [statement](#) Thursday that the committee's approval of an \$886 billion military budget was a vote "for military contractor profits and against the climate, against parents trying to provide for their families, and against diplomacy."

"The people of the United States are dealing with real issues," said Eikenberry. "Climate change, which our gas-guzzling military accelerates, causes wildfires that clog our skylines. Inflation and the looming restart of student loan payments cut into our personal and family budgets. Inequality—racial, gender, and economic—keeps many communities off-kilter and on the margins."

"Instead of addressing these enduring sources of insecurity," Eikenberry added, "Congress decided to grease the wheels of the war machine and its profiteers."

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