

'A Moral and Political Disgrace': Just 11 Senators Vote No on \$858 Billion Military Budget

"At a time when we spend more than the next 11 nations combined on defense, we should invest in healthcare, jobs, housing, and education—not more weapons of destruction," said Sen. Bernie Sanders.

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In an overwhelming bipartisan vote late Thursday, the U.S. Senate passed legislation authorizing \$858 billion in military spending for Fiscal Year 2023, a sum that drew dissent from just a handful of lawmakers and outrage from watchdogs who said the money should be spent on fighting the climate emergency, poverty, and other pressing crises.

The \$858 billion budget amounts to a roughly 10% increase from the previous year and \$45 billion more than the historic sum President Joe Biden requested, and it was approved even after the Pentagon [failed yet another audit](#), unable to account for more than 60% of its assets.

Much of the newly authorized money, as analyst Stephen Semler has [shown](#), is likely to wind up in the pockets of military contractors. The NDAA passed by a [vote of 83 to 11](#).

"This absurdly inflated Pentagon budget is a huge payout to military contractor corporations at the direct expense of the American people," Robert Weissman, the president of Public Citizen, [said](#) in a statement, calling the military policy legislation "a moral and political disgrace."

"The money wasted on the Pentagon... siphons funding away from reducing child poverty, expanding healthcare, addressing the climate crisis, and countless other priorities," Weissman continued. "This spending level is a testament to the corporate capture and corruption of the Pentagon budgeting process. It leaves the nation less secure and more unjust. It is an utter, total disgrace."

Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), one of just 11 senators to vote against the NDAA, lamented that the bill provides the military with “many billions more than Congress has invested in addressing many of the biggest security concerns facing the American people—such as climate change, the opioid epidemic, poverty, hunger, and disease.”

“Instead, it doubles down on the failed approach of pouring money into a bloated, inefficient, and sometimes counterproductive national security machine underwritten by an army of lobbyists and gold-plated contractors that fails to deliver on the needs of the American people,” Markey added. “I simply cannot support it.”

Markey noted that he proposed an NDAA amendment that would have sliced just 1% off the \$858 billion topline and allocated the savings to global climate funding, but his proposal was not granted a floor vote—unlike Sen. Joe Manchin’s (D-W.Va.) proposed giveaway to the fossil fuel industry, which was [voted down](#) Thursday evening.

Joining Markey in voting against the NDAA were Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), and Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.).

“At a time when we spend more than the next 11 nations combined on defense, we should invest in healthcare, jobs, housing, and education—not more weapons of destruction,” Sanders [tweeted](#) late Thursday.

Breaking: Senate passed an \$858 billion military budget.

We’re sprinting towards \$1 TRILLION.

Meanwhile:

1.2 billion people worldwide will be climate refugees by 2050

100 million Americans have medical debt

500,000 Americans are homeless

It doesn’t have to be this way.

— Public Citizen (@Public_Citizen) [December 16, 2022](#)

Having [passed the House](#) last week by a vote of 350 to 80, the NDAA now heads to President Joe Biden’s desk.

As *Defense News* [reported](#), the legislation “allocates more than \$8 billion to procure high-priority munitions while granting the Pentagon emergency procurement powers to bolster production and refill U.S. stockpiles sent to Ukraine.”

“The final bill includes a requirement for the U.S. Navy to maintain 31 operational amphibious ships, despite opposition from the White House,” the outlet added. “The White House also opposes funding a third Arleigh Burke-class destroyer. But the final bill allocates \$2.2 billion for the third Arleigh Burke ship. Additionally, the bill sets aside \$25 million to continue the sea-launched cruise missile nuclear development program,

also known as SLCM-N, despite the Biden administration's attempts to cancel it."

The peace group CodePink [said](#) in a statement Thursday that "if common sense were to prevail, President Biden would veto this budget and instruct Congress to use these resources to address the climate crisis, the world's common enemy."

"They would invest in infrastructure and education, free healthcare so our illnesses can't be turned around for profit. They would provide student and medical debt relief, and everyone has a roof over their head," the group said. "Elected officials, who trade war stocks, are telling us that an arms sale or buying another F-35 fighter jet is in our best interest. The people know what we want, and it's not endless war."

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