



Staff members unload copies of President Bush's proposed budget on Capitol Hill on Monday. Congress members got a first-

hand look at a budget that includes \$70 billion in new funds to keep the war in Iraq continuing through September.

Bush's plan includes a few sensitive cuts

By DAVID ESPO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Bush's budget calls for robust spending on defense and homeland security as well as fresh tax cuts and a counterattack on relentless red ink. That's comfortable territory for Republican lawmakers in an election year.

The finer print seeks \$71 billion in savings over five years from Medicare, Medicaid, payments to farmers and other benefit programs.

Democrats eager to regain power swiftly attacked them, and politically vulnerable Republicans may well shy away.

Some safe-seat Republicans, too. "Nearly \$9 billion in cuts over the next 10 years are being proposed for agriculture, including changes to dairy programs, crop payments and marketing loans," said Kansas GOP Rep. Jerry Moran, who drew no Democratic opponent in winning a fifth term in 2004.

"These proposed cuts to agriculture do not come at a good time."

Bush, not on the ballot, took a different view.

"Unconstrained spending in the nation's large entitlement programs poses a serious threat to the federal budget and to the health of the economy," the budget said.

Message to members of Congress: Pick your poison. Now or later.

Entitlement programs is government-speak for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, farm price supports, food stamps and other programs that generally are on automatic pilot.

They serve millions — often identifiable, influential blocs of voters — and grow as the eligible population does.

Thousands of other programs are known as discretionary, and they cover everything from the arts to Zuni Indian Tribe water rights settlements. Defense is by far the largest of them.

Big or small, unlike the benefit programs, these all receive annual scrutiny in Congress. As a result, they are more likely to change from year to year to reflect the priorities of a president or congressional majority.

Yet in debate that spilled over to the new year, the GOP-controlled Congress approved the first curbs on benefit programs in about a decade. The savings total about \$39 billion over five years — a trim of 0.4 percent Medicaid funding and 0.3 percent cut in Medicare.

The bill passed on the strength of Vice President Dick Cheney's tie breaker in the Senate, and cleared the House 216-214. Not a single Democrat in either House supported it.

Congress gets look at Bush's budget plan

President still to ask for additional \$18B for hurricane relief

By ANDREW TAYLOR
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Bush sent his GOP allies in Congress an austere budget for next year that is filled with political land mines and flush with difficult choices.

The document unveiled Monday clamps down on domestic programs favored by lawmakers and calls for politically perilous curbs to Medicare that promise to bog down in a Congress already poisoned by election-year politics.

"It's a heavy lift," said



Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg, R-N.H. "There's no question it's going to be a challenge."

Despite the sacrifices called for in education, Amtrak, community development and local law enforcement grants, health research, and many other programs frozen or cut under his plan, Bush's \$2.77 trillion blueprint forecasts a record \$423 billion deficit for the current year and improves upon that figure in 2007 largely by lowballing cost estimates for the war in Iraq.

Bush gives a generous 6.9 percent budget increase to

the Pentagon, which would receive a record \$439 billion before accounting for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and wants Congress to pass a \$3 billion or 14 percent increase in foreign aid.

His proposal projects \$70 billion in new funds to execute the war in Iraq through the end of September, which will come in a detailed request later this month and bring total war funding for 2006 to \$120 billion. Another \$50 billion is allocated for next year.

"My administration has focused the nation's resources on our highest priority, protecting our citizens and our homeland," Bush said in his budget message.

The White House also said that it will request another \$18 billion or so in hurricane relief in the next few days.

Bush projects a 2009 deficit of \$208 billion, but that depends on Congress accepting all of his spending cut proposals.

His budget also leaves out the long-term costs of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, which are impossible to predict with certainty.

With the increases for the Pentagon, this year's Iraq and Afghanistan war costs, and new tax cuts for health care, the budget shows that deficits over the five years ending in 2011 would total nearly \$1.2 trillion.

Lawmakers urged to keep tax cuts, offer health-care breaks

By MARY DALRYMPLE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

President Bush urged lawmakers Monday to reduce taxes \$1.7 trillion over the next decade, mostly cementing tax cuts passed earlier in his presidency.

The budget blueprint asks lawmakers to preserve tax cuts passed in recent years for workers, parents, investors and others. Those reductions

would otherwise disappear by the end of the decade.

"Allowing the tax relief to expire would result in large tax increases for millions of American families and businesses," the White House said in its budget documents.

Bush also proposed bigger tax breaks for small businesses and a broad expansion of health savings accounts, which would let individuals and families covered by high-

deductible health insurance policies to put aside money tax-free for medical expenses.

Keeping already enacted tax cuts in place for the coming decade would reduce money projected to flow from taxpayers to the federal government by \$1.4 trillion.

Details provided by the Treasury Department show the annual cost of keeping the tax reductions alive in the years after the president

leaves office, after the tax cuts are scheduled to expire.

Bush's tax cuts would amount to \$229 billion in fiscal year 2012 and grow to \$263 billion in 2016, the last year covered by the budget.

The White House did not propose a permanent fix for the alternative minimum tax but urged Congress to keep a temporary solution in place for another year, an idea that lawmakers already have under debate.

States slow to drop Social Security numbers from licenses

By DAVID A. LIEB
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.

Millions of motorists across the nation are carrying around driver's licenses containing their Social Security numbers, a potential jackpot for identity thieves.

Privacy experts strongly warn against the practice. And a recent federal law ordered states to stop issuing licenses displaying Social Security numbers.

Yet some states continue to do so, a review by The Associated

Press has found. And in other states that have dropped the practice, it could take up to eight years before people who have licenses with Social Security numbers on them are issued new ones.

A sampling of just 11 states by the AP identified more than 14 million motorists with Social Security numbers on their licenses.

A name, birthdate and address are valuable pieces of information for someone who wants to steal another person's identity and obtain loans and credit

cards. But a Social Security number is the richest prize of them all.

About 8.9 million U.S. adults were victims of identity fraud in 2005, costing an estimated \$57 billion, according to a survey released by the Better Business Bureau. One contributing factor is believed to be the availability of Social Security numbers on driver's licenses and health insurance cards that people carry around in their wallets and purses and display when writing checks at stores.

A 2003 survey by the American Association of Motor Vehicle

Administrators identified 17 states and the District of Columbia where Social Security numbers were put on licenses. In all of those jurisdictions, drivers could ask that the number be put on or left off. But in some cases, drivers were encouraged by motor vehicle clerks to put their Social Security numbers on their licenses for the sake of convenience.

In 2004, President Bush signed a law barring states from putting Social Security numbers on new or renewed driver's licenses, identification cards or vehicle registrations. The law

took effect this past December.

Privacy expert Eric Gertler, author of the book "Prying Eyes," strongly suggests that people remove their Social Security numbers from their licenses.

"When an identity thief criminal wants to take advantage of you — rob you of your identity, steal your good name — the first area of attack is the Social Security number," Gertler said.

"By having your Social Security number on your driver's license, it's basically one-stop shopping — or, let's say, one-stop stealing — for an identity thief."



AP PHOTO

Oprah Winfrey, right, embraces Christine King Farris, left, as Dexter Scott King applauds behind them during a musical tribute to Coretta Scott King at the new Ebenezer Church in Atlanta on Monday.

Mourners wait in rain to see King

During weekend 42,000 visited Georgia capitol

By ERRIN HAINES
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA

Thousands of mourners filed past the casket of Coretta Scott King on Monday, paying their respects to the "first lady of the civil rights movement" at the historic church where her husband shared his dream for racial equality in the 1960s.

People lined up for blocks outside Ebenezer Baptist Church, waiting for hours in freezing rain for a moment to bid farewell to the widow of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Across the street, at least 1,000 people filled the church's newer facility for a musical tribute, including Oprah Winfrey and other entertainers such as Gladys Knight.

"For me, she embodied royalty. She was the queen," Winfrey said. "You knew she was a force."

King, 78, died Jan. 30 at an alternative medicine clinic in Mexico, where doctors said she was battling advanced ovarian cancer. She also had been recovering from a serious stroke and heart attack.

As the service concluded, King's eldest daughter, Yolanda King, told the gathering: "I know it is the prayers of so many of you and from all over the world that carried her safely home. We knew firsthand the enduring power of love."

Inside the silent sanctuary, mourners filed slowly past the casket, some lingering a moment before moving on. A shroud of flowers blanketed the lower half of the casket, and wreaths stood on either side, decorated with roses, King's favorite flower.

At least 6,000 adults and children passed through the sanctuary in the first three hours, officials said.

During the weekend, some 42,000 mourners walked past King's open casket at the state Capitol, where she became the first woman and the first black person to lie in honor there. It was a striking contrast to the official snub her slain husband had been given by then-Gov. Lester Maddox, an outspoken segregationist.

President Bush and former President Clinton lead the list of dignitaries expected to attend her funeral today, to be conducted at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, a 10,000-seat church in Lithonia where the Kings' youngest child, Bernice, is a minister.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

P.O. Box 699
Franklin, IN 46131
letters@thejournalnet.com

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Publisher

Jeffrey W. Owen 736-2744
jowen@thejournalnet.com

Editor

Scarlett Syse 736-2749
syse@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor

Michele Holtkamp-Frye 736-2774
mholtkamp@thejournalnet.com

Assistant managing editor

Jennifer L. Gaskin 736-2721
jgaskin@thejournalnet.com

Circulation director

Mike Warren 736-2711
mwarren@thejournalnet.com

Delivery manager

Bruce Powell 736-2702
bpowell@thejournalnet.com

Advertising director

Christina Cosner 736-2750
ccosner@thejournalnet.com

Administrative manager

Linda Wirey 736-2751
lwirey@thejournalnet.com

Information technology manager

Kathy McDermott 736-2782
kmcdermott@thejournalnet.com

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