

Trump Defies Congress, Vetoes \$740 Billion Defense Bill

December 23, 2020 **by Dan McCue**



President Donald Trump speaks at the White House in Washington.
(AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump made good on a threat Wednesday, vetoing the \$740 billion National Defense Authorization Act.

Congress passed the fiscal year 2021 defense spending plan earlier this month with more than the two-thirds majority needed in both chambers to override a veto.

If the House and Senate do override Trump's veto, it would be the first time they did so during his presidency.

The bill, which has become law for 59 years in a row, is considered must-pass because it authorizes a host of special pay

and bonuses for troops, military construction projects, training programs and other vital operations.

In a message to lawmakers on Capitol Hill, Trump said, “unfortunately, the Act fails to include critical national security measures, includes provisions that fail to respect our veterans and our military’s history.”

He went on to say the spending package “contradicts efforts by my administration to put America first in our national security and foreign policy actions.”

“It is a ‘gift’ to China and Russia,” he complained.

Specifically, the president objected to Congress failing to repeal Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, a law that has nothing to do with the Pentagon, but which he believes provides a legal shield to tech companies like Twitter and Facebook.

Trump also said he was vetoing the Act because it included a provision requiring Confederate military bases to be renamed within three years.

Trump, who had 10 days excluding Sundays to act after Congress sent him the bill, waited until the last day he could to veto it.

Congress must override the veto before noon on Jan. 3, when the 117th Congress will be sworn-in. If Congress fails to override the veto by then, lawmakers would need to start from scratch on the bill.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded to word of the president’s veto by calling it “an act of staggering recklessness that harms our troops, endangers our security and undermines the will of the bipartisan Congress.”

Noting that the NDAA has been passed on a bipartisan and bicameral basis for nearly 60 years, Pelosi said that at “a time when our country was just targeted with a massive cyberattack, it is particularly hard to understand the reasoning behind the President’s irresponsibility.”

“Disturbingly, Trump is using his final hours in office to sow chaos, including by denying our servicemembers a long-overdue pay raise and hazard duty pay; our families paid family leave, child care, housing and health protections; and our veterans the benefits that they need and deserve,” she continued. “The President’s veto also deprives our country and allies of tools to protect global security – including for cyber-security.”

As of Wednesday afternoon, the House planned to hold its veto override vote Monday, returning to Capitol Hill for a rare post-Christmas session.

If the House successfully overrides Trump, the Senate will return on Tuesday. However, the vote will likely not be a slam dunk and it’s likely senators loyal to Trump will drag out the process.

The speculation on the Hill at present is that the Senate might not vote on the override until the morning of Jan. 3, hours before the noon swearing in of the new Congress.

The NDAA passed the House earlier this month by a vote of 355-78. It then passed the Senate, 84-13.



