



## Rand Paul Explains Why He Held Up Vote on Massive Spending Bill

After a brief five-and-a-half hour government shutdown, Congress passed a \$400 billion budget deal early on the morning of February 9. At 7:39 that morning, President Trump tweeted: “Just signed Bill. Our Military will now be stronger than ever before. We love and need our Military and gave them everything — and more. First time this has happened in a long time. Also means JOBS, JOBS, JOBS!”



The House had approved the legislation on a 240-186 vote hours after the Senate approved the package by a 71-28 vote shortly before 2:00 a.m. The reason for the vote being held in the early hours of the morning was that it had been repeatedly held up by Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who steadfastly objected to the massive amount of spending the bill authorized. His response to the pressure exerted on him by his Senate colleagues to go along with the spending was, “I didn’t come up here to be part of somebody’s club. I didn’t come up here to be liked.”

The legislation was a bipartisan effort put together through the efforts of Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky), and House leaders, and Schumer bragged about his party’s role in it:

What makes Democrats proudest of this bill is that after a decade of cuts to programs that help the middle class, we have a dramatic reversal. Funding for education, infrastructure, fighting drug abuse, and medical research will all, for the first time in years, get very significant increases, and we have placed Washington on a path to deliver more help to the middle class in the future.

The budget package will keep federal agencies open until March 23. In the interim, the House and Senate Appropriations committees will put together a massive \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill that will fund federal agencies until September 30.

A CNN politics reporter noted in a February 9 opinion piece (“Rand Paul was right”) that when Senator Paul went to the Senate floor shortly before 6:00 p.m. on February 8, virtually all his Republican colleagues “grimaced.”

The writer, Christ Cillizza, said that “Paul’s speech, which slowed attempts to pass a massive budget deal before the government shut down at midnight, was a savaging of his party — a party that appears to have turned 180 degrees from the deficit hawks of the mid 2010s who insisted that government spending was ballooning out of control and was crippling the country.”

The following excerpts are quoted from a transcript of Paul’s Senate floor speech:

When the Democrats are in power, Republicans appear to be the conservative party. But when Republicans are in power, it seems there is no conservative party.

You see, opposition seems to bring people together, and they know what they’re not for. But then they get in power and they decide, we’re just going to spend that money too. We’re going to send



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 12, 2018

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that money to our friends this time.

The hypocrisy hangs in the air and chokes anyone with a sense of decency or intellectual honesty.

The right cries out, “Our military is hollowed out!” Even though military spending more than doubled since 2001.

The left is no better. Democrats don’t oppose military money as long as they can get some for themselves... for their pet causes.

The dirty little secret is that, by and large, both parties don’t care about the debt.

The spending bill is 700 pages, and there will be no amendments.

The debate, although it’s somewhat inside baseball that we’re having here, is over me having a 15-minute debate. And they say, “Woe is me! If you get one, everybody will want an amendment.”

Well, that would be called debate....

Take it or leave it. You know what? I’m going to leave it. I didn’t come up here for this. I didn’t leave my family throughout the week and travel up here to be a part of something that is so much inertia, and so much status quo, that they’re not leading the country. They’re just following along, and it’s a big ball rolling down a hill grabbing up your dollars as the boulder rolls down the hill, it gets bigger and bigger, it’s going to crush us.

But nobody has the guts to stand up and say no.

On February 11, Paul was interviewed by Major Garrett, the chief White House correspondent with CBS News, on the Sunday morning program *Face the Nation*. After Garrett asked the senator what he accomplished by his attempts to slow down approval of the budget bill, Paul said: “I think we should draw attention to the fact that we’re spending so much money.”

Paul continued by saying:

And I think one of the questions ... Republicans ... are not willing to ask themselves is, can you be fiscally conservative and be for unlimited military spending?

There’s sort of this question, is the military budget too small, or maybe is our mission too large around the world? And because Republicans are unwilling to confront that, they want more and more and more for military spending.

And so to get that, they have to give Democrats what they want, which is more, more, more for domestic spending. And the compromise, while some are happy, oh, it’s bipartisanship, well, if the bipartisanship is exploding the deficit, I’m not so sure that’s the kind of bipartisanship we need.

Paul’s stance as a noninterventionist on foreign policy is well known, but the price for our nation’s constant involvement in overseas military operations is most commonly counted in lives lost. During his interview, however, Paul — who is also a fiscal conservative and a strict constitutionalist — tied in the cost of waging undeclared wars to our national budget deficit and how that money might be better spent.

The Kentucky senator noted that our nation is actively engaged in war in about seven countries, but Congress hasn’t voted on declaring or authorizing the use of military force in over 15 years.

Paul said he keeps asking his colleagues in the Senate and Congress, “How can we be at war without ever voting on it? Don’t the American people through their representatives get a chance to say when we



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to go war?”

Paul gave the war in Afghanistan as an example of wasted spending, noting that is “long past its mission.” He said, “I think we killed and captured and disrupted the people who attacked us on 9/11 long ago. And I think now it’s a nation-building exercise. We’re spending \$50 billion a year.”

In an apparent reference to President Trump’s statement in his recent State of the Union speech, wherein he said, “As we rebuild our industries, it is also time to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure,” Paul stated, “And if the president really is serious about infrastructure, a lot of that money [spent in overseas war zones] could be spent at home. Instead of building bridges and schools and roads in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, I think we could do that at home.”

*Photo: AP Images*

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