

House votes to restrict Trump on Iran

Democrats steer Pentagon policy to the left as they try to block money for border wall

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Democratic-controlled House voted Friday to put a liberalized stamp on Pentagon policy, including a bipartisan proposal to limit President Donald Trump's authority to make war against Iran.

The measure passed along party lines after a series of votes that pushed it further to the left. Among them was a 251-170 tally to require Trump get authorization from Congress to conduct military strikes against Iran, along with a

repeal of a 2002 law authorizing the war in Iraq.

More than two dozen Republicans joined with Democrats on the Iran vote. Trump last month came within minutes of launching a missile strike against Iran in retaliation for Iran's downing of a U.S. drone.

The broader measure passed by a 220-197 vote after several other provisions were tacked on by the Democratic Party's progressive wing, which had been upset by leadership's handling of a border bill last month.

"On the floor, the bill

has taken a radical left turn," said Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee. "There's good and bad in this bill ... but it's moving in a direction that does make America less safe."

The Trump administration has promised to veto the House measure. The Senate passed its own bill last month. Lawmakers will try to reconcile the competing versions in what could be lengthy negotiations given the differences.

The House measure, which cuts Trump's re-

quest for the military by \$17 billion, is still too rich for some progressives. They also balk at its continued funding of overseas military operations.

But the measure includes Democratic priorities such as a ban on transferring new detainees to the Guantanamo Bay prison and a denial of Trump's request for \$88 million to build a new prison at the base. It removes a ban against transferring detainees from Guantanamo Bay to the United States that was enacted when Democrats

controlled Congress in the early years of the Obama administration.

Republicans are less critical about the measure's overall cost than with its contents, especially in military readiness accounts.

It would ban the deployment of a new submarine-launched low-yield nuclear missile and block the administration from shifting military money to a U.S.-Mexico border wall.

"It's a bill that I think Democrats should be happy with," said the chairman of the House

Armed Services Committee, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash. "It's not everything they want but we need to pass it to say, 'This is our position,' to move the ball in the direction we want."

Other provisions are broadly popular, including a 3.1% pay raise for military service members and authorization to procure new weapons systems, and expanded health and child benefits for military families.

Another provision would deliver 12 weeks of paid family leave to all federal workers.



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/The Associated Press

Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., wipes her eyes while testifying before the House Oversight Committee hearing on family separation and detention centers Friday on Capitol Hill in Washington. Also sitting on the panel with Tlaib are Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., (left) and Rep. Ayanna Pressley, D-Mass.

Dems, GOP trade blame over migrant conditions at border

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats who've visited the southern border accused President Donald Trump of cruelty on Friday while Republicans said Democrats were playing politics but doing little to help as the parties clashed at a House hearing over who's to blame for squalid conditions facing migrants detained entering the U.S.

In an extraordinary duel that underscored the political heat emitted by Trump's hard-line immigration policies, four lawmakers from each party who've visited the U.S.-Mexico boundary testified to the House Oversight and Reform Committee about what they've seen and came to starkly different conclusions. The hearing came as the number of families, children and other migrants entering the U.S. from Mexico has surged above 100,000 monthly since March, overwhelming federal agencies' ability to detain them in sanitary conditions and highlighting the issue as the 2020 presidential and congressional campaigns are in their early stages.

"It is a policy of dehumanizing," said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cor-

tez, D-N.Y., one of four high-profile Democratic freshmen who testified.

They were among a larger group of Democrats who visited Texas border facilities last week and returned reporting overloaded, fetid facilities and said detained women spoke of being told to drink from toilets and eat unhealthy food.

"What was worse about it was the fact that there were American flags hanging all over the facility," she said.

Another congressional newcomer, Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., said, "We do have a crisis at our border. It is one of morality."

Sitting at the same table as their Democratic counterparts, four border state Republicans blamed the Democratic Party for the problem.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, accused Democrats of using their border trip to put on "a show in front of fences and the media" and of "vilifying" border agents for a problem they've not caused. He said by not toughening immigration laws, Democrats have "created the very magnet" that attracts migrants to the U.S. And then, he said, the Democratic-controlled House "cowardly sits in the corner, doing nothing" to address the problems that result.

Congress last month approved a \$4.6 billion measure with money to improve border stations and migrants' treatment. That passed only after liberal and Hispanic Democrats voted "no," complaining that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., hadn't fought hard enough to add requirements for how detained migrants must be treated.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., said comparing the detention camps to Nazi concentration camps — a pointed swipe at Ocasio-Cortez, who has used the analogy — doesn't help solve the problem.

The crossfire was further fueled after the panel's Democrats released a report on 2,648 of the children the Trump administration separated from their families last year before abandoning that policy under widespread pressure.

The report, based on data the panel demanded from federal agencies, found that 18 children under age 2 — half of whom were just months old — were kept from their parents up to half a year. Hundreds were held longer than previously revealed, including 25 kept more than a year, and at least 30 remain apart from their parents.

Prosecutors call for Epstein to be held without bail in sex case

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Federal prosecutors urged a judge Friday to keep financier Jeffrey Epstein behind bars until trial on

sex trafficking charges involving underage girls, labeling him a "serial sexual predator" and expressing concern he might try to influence witnesses.

The prosecutors submitted written arguments in advance of a bail hearing Monday, saying he faces "the very real possibility" of spending the rest of his life in prison and seems not to understand the gravity of his crimes.

"And any doubt that the defendant is unrepentant and unreformed was eliminated when law enforcement agents discovered hundreds or thousands of nude and seminude photographs of young females in his Manhattan mansion on the night of his arrest, more than a decade after he was first convicted of a sex crime involving a juvenile," prosecutors wrote.

They said they were unaware of any victim expressing support for Epstein receiving bail pending trial.

The filing came a day after defense lawyers told U.S. District Judge Richard M. Berman that Epstein should be given bail and confined to his \$77 million Manhattan mansion with electronic monitoring.

Epstein was arrested Saturday after arriving at a New Jersey airport from Paris.

Epstein pleaded not guilty Monday to charges alleging he recruited and abused dozens of underage



Epstein

girls at his mansions in New York and Palm Beach, Fla., in the early 2000s.

The case is being brought more than a decade after Epstein secretly cut a deal with prosecutors to dispose of nearly identical allegations.

The exposure of that deal and revelations amid the new charges against Epstein led to the resignation Friday of Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, who oversaw that deal.

In their submission, prosecutors also said they were worried Epstein, 66, might try to derail his trial. They said Epstein recently paid \$100,000 to one individual "named as a possible co-conspirator" in a non-prosecution agreement with federal prosecutors in Florida 12 years ago.

They said that the payment, along with \$250,000 sent to another person who was a former employee and was named as a possible co-conspirator in the non-prosecution agreement, came after the Miami Herald last November began publishing a series of article describing the circumstances of his state court conviction in Florida in 2008 and the deal that allowed him to avoid federal prosecution.

"This course of action, and in particular its timing, suggests the defendant was attempting to further influence co-conspirators who might provide information against him in light of the recently re-emerging allegations," prosecutor said.

His lawyers said the new charges will fail because he's protected by his non-prosecution deal with federal prosecutors.

EPA to allow use of pesticide 'very highly toxic' to bees

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency approved broad new applications Friday for a controversial insecticide, despite objections from environmental groups and beekeepers who say it is among the compounds responsible for eviscerating the nation's bee populations.

Alexandra Dunn, head of the EPA office that oversees pesticides, said the agency was "thrilled" to be able to approve new uses and lift past restrictions on sulfoxaflo, which she called a "highly effective" tool for growers around the country — but which the agency itself considers "very highly toxic" to bees. The decision will allow the chemical to be applied to a wide range of crops, including citrus and corn,

soybeans and strawberries, pineapples and pumpkins.

"EPA is providing long-term certainty for U.S. growers to use an important tool to protect crops and avoid potentially significant economic losses, while maintaining strong protection for pollinators," Dunn said.

The agency's critics, some of whom successfully sued the EPA in federal court during the Obama administration to restrict use of the pesticide, were anything but thrilled with the announcement.

"At a time when honeybees and other pollinators are dying in greater numbers than ever before, EPA's decision to remove restrictions on yet another bee-killing pesticide is nothing short of reckless," Greg Loarie, an attorney for the environmental advocacy group, Earthjustice, said in an email.

The news comes during a time



JAH CHIKWENDIU/The Washington Post
Toni Burnham, president of DC Beekeepers Alliance, checks on the health of a honey bee colony where DC Water keeps four beehives on the rooftop of one of its buildings.

that commercial honeybee colonies have been declining at a startling rate. The annual loss rate for honeybees during the year ending

in April rose to 40.7 percent, up slightly over the annual average of 38.7 percent, according to the Bee Informed Partnership, a non-

profit group associated with the University of Maryland.

Some of the losses have been associated with events such as massive wildfires in the west, the wet winter in the Midwest and hurricanes in the Southeast. But the bee losses documented over the past decade are often blamed in no small part on the increased use of fungicides, herbicides and certain pesticides.

Sulfoxaflo was approved by the EPA in 2013, but a collection of beekeepers and other opponents sued the agency over its use, saying studies made it clear that it was highly toxic to honey bees. In 2015, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that federal regulators lacked adequate data to show the pesticide did not pose serious risk to pollinators, and the court vacated the agency's approval of sulfoxaflo.