President's budget proposal includes significant cuts to Hawaii programs, services

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - The Trump Administration unveiled its $1.1 trillion dollar budget proposal Thursday, saying it refocuses on the nation's priorities, while eliminating wasteful spending.

The president wants to increase defense spending by $54 billion dollars, and some say that's great for the state's economy, which heavily depends on the military. But critics have major concerns that the plan is filled with harmful cuts to many programs and services important to Hawaii families.
At Jarrett Middle School in Palolo, students get free food, tutoring, and enrichment classes -- like art, sports, and architecture. But the After School All-Stars Program would lose all its federal funding under this proposal.

"I think it would be devastating to the lives of these children. A lot of the students come here because they don't have support at home, they don't have the guidance at home. Basically, for some of these students, that snack is the only type of meal they will get after school," said site coordinator Christianne Jardin.

The Trump budget would also eliminate Community Development Block Grants, which pay for affordable housing and infrastructure projects. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's popular Sea Grant program at the University of Hawaii could also be wiped out.

The Environmental Protection Agency would be dismantled, as well as $250 million dollars in cuts to coastal research programs, which help communities recover from natural disasters.

Funding for new transit projects would be chopped, while TIGER grants -- like the one helping Kauai revitalize Lihue Town -- would be slashed.

The plan also zeros out federal funding for PBS Hawaii, National Public Radio and the East-West Center at UH Manoa, leaving Hawaii's premiere think tank with half its budget.

U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa says President Trump's "budget prioritization cannot come at the expense of other programs essential to Hawaii and the well-being of Hawaii's people."

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono says of the budget -- "If you're rich and powerful, you'll be fine. Everyone else is left out to dry."

Meanwhile, Republican State Rep. Gene Ward says its good for the federal government to scale back and it's up to Hawaii's congressmembers to help find a balance.

"We've got to get our delegation on board to start cooperating with the president to bring some of this money back in. Let's get on board the Trump train and get on with it. The sky is not going to fall," said Ward.

Only three departments are getting a boost in funding under President Trump's budget. The Defense Department would get a 9 percent bump to increase the size of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.
Homeland Security Department would get more funds to help pay for that controversial wall, plus hundreds of new immigration and border patrol agents.

And the Veterans Affairs Department would see its budget grow by 6-percent to help improve veterans' access to medical services.

Meanwhile, U.S. Senator Brian Schatz reminds everyone that congress gets the final say on the budget. He says the proposal is not going to happen.

The president's proposal only covers discretionary spending, which are funds that Congress can adjust every year, and it only accounts for about a quarter of the total budget.

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