

Water works



Photo provided
Irving College School students received their free water bottles Monday. Warren County Health Department obtained a grant that provided every student in Warren County Schools with a free water bottle as a health incentive to drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages. Pictured is Ashlynn Graves with her free bottle.

Trump budget adds to deficit, increases military funding

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump unveiled a \$4.4 trillion budget plan Monday that envisions steep cuts to America’s social safety net but mounting spending on the military, formally retreating from last year’s promises to balance the federal budget.

The president’s spending outline for the first time acknowledges the Republican tax overhaul passed last year would add billions to the deficit and not “pay for itself” as Trump and his Republican allies asserted. If enacted as proposed, though no presidential budget ever is, the plan would establish an era of \$1 trillion-plus yearly deficits.

The open embrace of red ink is a remarkable public reversal for Trump and his party, which spent years objecting to President Barack Obama’s increased spending during the depths of the Great Recession. Rhetoric aside, however, Trump’s pattern is in line with past Republican presidents who have overseen spikes in deficits as they simultaneously increased military spending and enacted cut taxes.

“We’re going to have the strongest military we’ve ever had, by far,” Trump said in an Oval Office appearance Monday. “In this budget we took care of the military like it’s never been taken care of before.”

Trump’s budget revived his calls for big cuts to domestic programs that benefit the poor and middle class, such as food stamps, housing subsidies and student loans. Retirement benefits would remain mostly untouched by Trump’s plan, as he has pledged, though Medicare providers would absorb about \$500 billion in cuts — a nearly 6 percent reduction. Some beneficiaries in Social Security’s disability program would have to re-enter the workforce under proposed changes to eligibility rules.

While all presidential budgets are essentially dead on arrival — Congress writes and enacts its own spending legislation — Trump’s plan was dead before it landed. It came just three days after the president signed a bipartisan agreement that set broad parameters for spending over the next two years. That deal, which includes large increases for domestic programs, rendered Monday’s Trump plan for 10-year, \$1.7 trillion cuts to domestic agencies such as the departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture and Housing and Urban Development even more unrealistic.

Trump also is proposing

work requirements for several federal programs, including housing subsidies, food stamps and Medicaid. Such ideas have backing from powerful figures in Congress including Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, who promises action on a “workforce development” agenda this year.

There was immediate opposition from Democrats.

“The Trump budget proposal makes clear his desire to enact massive cuts to health care, anti-poverty programs and investments in economic growth to blunt the deficit-exploding impact of his tax cuts for millionaires and corporations,” said Rep. John Yarmuth of Kentucky, the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

Some Republicans, on the other hand, said spending was much too high.

“This budget continues too much of Washington’s wasteful spending — it does not balance in ten years, and it creates a deficit of over a trillion dollars next year,” said Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida. “We cannot steal from America’s future to pay for spending today.”



TRUMP

STATE ROUNDUP

WARTBURG (AP) — An inmate’s alleged perimeter breach at a Tennessee prison has led to the firing of eight prison employees.

In a Jan. 26 release, the Tennessee Department of Correction said 36-year-old Robert Fusco had “breached the secure perimeter” of the Morgan County Regional Correctional Complex with the intent of introducing contraband into the prison. Authorities did not provide a timeframe.

Department spokeswoman Neysa Taylor confirmed Friday to the Chattanooga Times Free Press the eight employees had been fired, but wouldn’t say more.

Fusco was a minimum security inmate, but has since been transferred to West Tennessee State Penitentiary as a maximum custody inmate. He’s expected to be charged with escape because of the purposeful breach.

The TBI continues to investigate.

NASHVILLE (AP) — A bill in Tennessee would limit the ability of state licensing boards to deny occupational

licenses based on the criminal history of applicants.

Republican Sen. Kerry Roberts of Springfield, Democratic Senate Minority Leader Lee Harris of Memphis and Republican Rep. Jeremy Faison of Cosby announced the “fresh start” legislation Monday.

The bill would only let boards deny licenses based on past crimes that are directly related to the job someone is seeking, or for certain felonies.

The legislation also would let applicants petition a state licensing board upfront to see if a past crime will disqualify them.

A news release from the lawmakers says Tennessee

requires a license for 110 jobs, and almost every licensing board can deny a license due to past criminal records, including misdemeanors.

NASHVILLE (AP) — The University of Tennessee at Knoxville’s chancellor has drawn scrutiny during a Republican-led legislative meeting for attending a fundraiser that generated \$300,000-plus for the school’s LGBT center.

The Vol Means All group says the Feb. 1 fundraising haul is 10 percent of its \$3 million endowment goal for the Pride Center. University spokeswoman Katherine Pauline Saxon says the cen-

ter’s budget is currently \$82,350, privately funded.

In 2016, the Republican-led legislature voted to divert almost \$446,000 from the university’s Office for Diversity and Inclusion, which funded the Pride Center.



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