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E.P.A. and Public Broadcasting Are on House Republicans’ List for Deep Cuts

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WASHINGTON — House Republicans on Friday rolled out what they called historic cuts in federal spending after conservatives in the party’s new majority demanded that the leadership follow through on a pledge to carve $100 billion from the current year’s budget.

The spending bill, put forward by the Appropriations Committee for consideration on the floor next week, proposes slashing a wide portfolio of domestic programs and foreign aid. It blocks the spending of about $2 billion in unused economic stimulus money and seeks to prevent the Internal Revenue Service from enforcing the new health care law. The measure also cuts financing directly from the office of the president.

Republicans take aim at some of their favorite targets in the measure, reducing financing to the Environmental Protection Agency by $3 billion — an almost 30 percent cut from current levels. The measure would also block the agency from implementing new emissions regulations, and it would cut more than $100 million in spending on climate change programs.

Housing, energy and transportation spending is also trimmed substantially. Dozens of programs, including the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, are eliminated.

“These were hard decisions, and I know many people will not be happy with everything we’ve proposed in this package,” Representative Hal Rogers, the Kentucky Republican who is chairman of the Appropriations Committee, said in a statement Friday night. “That’s understandable and not unexpected, but I believe these reductions are necessary to show that we are serious about returning our nation to a sustainable financial path.”

The bill, which allocates spending through the end of the fiscal year on Sept. 30, will run into stiff opposition from Senate Democrats, who warned that Republicans were on a dangerous path to a potential shutdown of the federal government. The Democrats are urging a more measured approach, along the lines of a five-year freeze at 2010 levels for many programs advocated by President Obama in his State of the Union address.
“The priorities identified in this proposal for some of the largest cuts — environmental protection, health care, energy, science and law enforcement — are essential to the current and future well-being of our economy and communities across the country,” said Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. “Such an approach would knock the legs out from under our nascent economic recovery, kill jobs and do virtually nothing to address the long-term fiscal crisis facing our country.”

Were the Republican cuts to be enacted in full, they would reverberate throughout the operations of federal agencies, and represent one of the largest efforts to reverse the outflow of federal dollars in modern times.

“It is not going to be pretty,” said Representative Mike Simpson, Republican of Idaho and the chairman of an appropriations subcommittee that finances the Interior Department and other agencies. He said his committee had tried to be selective in reaching its goal.

“Obviously we don’t want to close the national parks and some other things,” he said. “There are areas where we can find reductions, which we’ve done. Are all of those acceptable to everybody? I don’t know.”

Democrats warned that Republicans were proposing unacceptable reductions with time running short before a March 4 deadline when the stopgap measure now financing the federal government runs out. Democrats said a stalemate would lead to a government shutdown like the one in 1995 that followed a face-off between Congressional Republicans and the Clinton administration.

“We know cutting is necessary; the question is what are we going to cut,” the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, told reporters on a conference call. “We cannot use a meat ax, and that’s what they are doing.”

Mr. Reid declined to specify an amount that Democrats would be willing to slice from federal spending this year, but he also chastised Republicans for struggling to agree on such a number among themselves.

Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, the No. 3 Democrat, said Republicans had boxed themselves in by specifying a target for cuts without first identifying how to carry out the reductions. “The trouble they’re having is that they seem to have a number in their head but not where the cuts come from,” Mr. Schumer said. “And so when they try to implement their number, it doesn’t work.”
House leaders had initially proposed a smaller level of reductions in domestic spending and foreign aid amounting to about $32 billion through Sept. 30. Republicans said those cuts, prorated for the balance of the fiscal year, would have fulfilled their campaign pledge to cut $100 billion from Mr. Obama’s budget request, which was never enacted.

But Republicans who campaigned on the $100 billion figure balked, forcing the Appropriations Committee back to the drawing board. The new cuts will total about $60 billion, and the plan appeared to be winning support from the conservative rank and file.

“House Republicans will keep our word to the American people,” said Representative Mike Pence, Republican of Indiana.

The Republicans had given themselves an extraordinarily difficult task by promising ahead of the November elections to exclude military and domestic security spending from their reductions. Roughly two-thirds of federal spending is for Social Security, Medicare and interest on the debt, and therefore outside the control of lawmakers looking to exact immediate cuts. Pentagon and security spending further narrowed the portion of the federal budget headed for the chopping block.