On May 2nd, the White House released what is generally referred to as a "skinny" budget request outlining priorities for discretionary spending for fiscal year 2026. A full federal budget proposal is expected later this month.

The "skinny" budget contains, by the White House's calculations, $163 billion in non-defense discretionary spending cuts, which it argues will generate trillions in savings over ten years. However, the budget also includes a 13% increase in defense spending and $175 billion for border security.

It is important to note that this is merely a budget *proposal*, and that Congress, exercising its power of the purse, ultimately adopts its own budget resolution and makes appropriations for the next fiscal year. During President Trump's first term, for example, Congress rejected his proposed deep cuts to environmental programs and clean energy initiatives.

That said, presidential proposals do shape budget outcomes. Especially given congressional Republicans' clear desire to work with this President rather than against him, the budget proposal should be taken seriously as an indicator of how Congress might choose to fund (or not fund) the federal government. Moreover, given that this administration has already frozen funds appropriated by Congress (and has even attempted to claw back money already allocated by the executive branch), the President's budget proposal gives us insight into how the administration might spend (or fail to spend) actual congressional appropriations.

The President's vision is one of American energy "dominance" but he has characterized climate change as a "scam." Unsurprisingly, therefore, climate and clean energy programs are particularly hard-hit in the President's budget.

Among other cuts, the budget proposes:

- Cancellation of $15.247 billion in Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds (which the document labels "Green New Scam" funds) for "unreliable renewable energy, removing carbon dioxide from the air, and other costly technologies burdensome to ratepayers and consumers." The cancellation would also purportedly "end[] taxpayer handouts to electric vehicle and battery makers."
- A $3.479 billion cut in the National Science Foundation's General Research and Education grant program for "climate and clean energy" (among other areas),

citing the “dubious public value” of research on the “speculative impacts from extreme climate scenarios.”

- A $2.572 billion cut from the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE), which the proposal states would reorient EERE programs to early-stage R&D and “technologies that promote firm baseload power and other priorities established in relevant Executive Orders, such as bioenergy.” The entry goes on to observe that EERE “has been responsible for a slew of unpopular regulations, harmful to Americans in their day-to-day lives, such as banning gas stoves and incandescent light bulbs.” (Note: while most incandescent light bulbs do not meet the Department’s 2023 standards, gas stoves have not been banned)

- A $1.148 billion cut from DOE’s Office of Science with remaining funds to prioritize “high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, quantum information science, fusion, and critical minerals” rather than “climate change and Green New Scam research.”

- A $260 million cut from DOE’s Advanced Research Project Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), noting that “Green New Scam technologies are not supported.”
- Elimination of EPA’s Atmospheric Protection Program on the grounds that it “imposes unnecessary and radical climate change regulations on businesses and stifles economic growth” through its prioritization of “climate change over job creation and energy independence.”

- An $80 million cut to renewable energy programs at the Department of the Interior to “eliminate support for Green New Deal technologies,” citing the President’s Executive Order on “Unleashing American Energy” and the Presidential Memorandum pausing onshore and offshore wind leasing and permitting programs

- A $1.311 billion funding reduction for operations, research, and grants for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and termination of “a variety of climate-dominated research, data, and grant programs, which are not aligned with Administration policy-ending ‘Green New Deal’ initiatives” including programs allegedly intended “to radicalize students against markets and spread environmental alarm” and funding for organizations like the Ocean Conservatory that the budget proposal suggests have “pushed agendas harmful to America’s fishing industries.” The proposal would also cut $209 million from NOAA’s satellite programs and cancel contracts for climate measurement instruments.

- A $1.161 billion cut from NASA's Earth Science programs for "low-priority climate monitoring satellites" and a reduction in funding for the Landsat program that monitors heat waves, snow and ice coverage, water use and evaporation, fires, algal blooms, and crop development, health and yields
- A $346 million cut in NASA funding for green aviation technology

There are also proposed cuts to energy programs that do not seem to have any connection to climate change or renewable generation technologies. For example, the budget proposes more than $1 billion in combined cuts from DOE's Office of Environmental Management for cleanup at contaminated nuclear sites, DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, and DOE's Office of Fossil Energy.

Some of the proposed cuts are likely to have a disproportionate impact on lower-income Americans, including the proposed elimination of the Department of Health and Human Service's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The administration proposes instead that we "support low-income individuals through energy dominance, lower prices, and an America First economic platform." The proposal also eliminates the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Services Block Grant program that provides money for a variety of initiatives, including initiatives to make homes more energy efficient.

It is difficult not to read some of the proposed cuts as an extension of this president's inclination to use the powers of the federal government to punish political opponents. The proposal:

- Observes that the LIHEAP program, which it seeks to eliminate, "rewards States like New York and California, two of the top recipients for LIHEAP funding, which have implemented anti-consumer policies that drive up home energy prices."
- Cuts Department of Labor grants for workforce training in part to avoid funding programs for "green jobs in California."
- Eliminates discretionary funding for USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, citing use of the program to support "[s]tate environmental regulations such as California's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, which regulates agricultural runoff."
- Eliminates the Presidio Trust, a federal agency that operates Presidio National Park in San Francisco, California.
- Cuts $564 million from U.S. Geological Survey grant programs to universities or

entities that “focus on social agendas (e.g. climate change)” and directs that the grant programs focus instead on “achieving dominance in energy and critical minerals.”
- Cuts $198 cut from Bureau of Land Management conservation programs whose funds, the proposal states, go to “left-wing environmental non-profits that work against development of energy and mineral resources and have other sources of funding for their projects.”

It remains to be seen how receptive Congress will be to the president’s budget priorities. Congressional Republicans are already expressing concerns about the elimination of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. If adopted, however, this budget proposal would effectively defund the federal government’s support for climate science and for the energy transition.