

House Debates Defense Bill, Rejects Controversial Amendments

Apurva Mahajan July 12, 2023



House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.) introduced the defense authorization bill for fiscal 2024 on July 12.

Credit: CSPAN

Congressional debate started July 12 on the fiscal 2024 defense authorization bill after scores of controversial amendments were rejected regarding identity politics, abortion and defense policy.

The House Rules Committee met July 11 to consider more than 1,500 amendments. It whittled down the list, rejecting amendments that would have made drastic changes to U.S. diplomacy and strategy in Ukraine—including a series proposed by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.).

The proposed amendments would not only have directed President Joe Biden to withdraw the U.S. from [NATO](#), but also prohibited funding to Ukraine until a diplomatic solution to its war with Russia is reached. They also would have cut \$300 million of Ukraine funding and forbidden the supply of [Lockheed Martin F-16](#) fighter jets and long-range missiles to Ukraine.

“The United States has been financing and promising to defend [NATO](#) countries for decades, and paying more than its fair share,” Greene said. “We should not be putting time and resources in putting the people of Ukraine over American citizens.”

The U.S. was one of only seven of 30 member states that met [NATO](#)’s defense spending target of 2% of the state’s GDP, according to [NATO](#) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s 2022 annual report.

Greene said [NATO](#) was not a reliable partner and called upon western European member countries to “step up” their financial contributions. She added that they are “entirely beholden to Russia” and U.S. taxpayers are expected to pay for the financial contributions that the rest of [NATO](#) does not provide enough of.

Greene also said funding Ukraine fails to meet both objectives of the Department of Defense’s self-described mission to “deter war and ensure our nation’s security.”

Last week, Greene, along with fellow Republican lawmakers Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.), criticized Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) on Twitter for his proposal of a Senate resolution to admit Ukraine into [NATO](#).

“Everyone in Washington should be urging peace and stopping the war in Ukraine. Not bringing us to the brink of World War III,” Greene wrote in response to Graham’s original tweet. “The Ukraine war is destabilizing Europe and changing the world’s economies. America doesn’t support this.”

For each of the last 62 years, Congress has passed a bill to set defense policy for the year. During the rules committee hearing, Sen. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), who serves as ranking member of the House [Armed Services Committee](#), stressed to committee members that the National Defense Authorization Act is a bipartisan bill and should remain that way.

“If it goes too far and is no longer what I feel is a bipartisan bill, then we’ll have to deal with that,” Smith said. “There are a number of amendments here that are deeply troubling if they pass.”

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