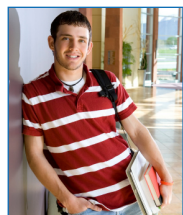


President Bush Threatens to Veto Appropriations Bill for Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services

By Nihit Aurora



The U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to approve a 2008 spending bill for the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. This bill proposes increasing the maximum Pell Grant by \$390. Additionally, it includes an increase of \$2 billion for the No Child Left Behind Act and proposes increasing funding by more than \$227 million for a variety of programs addressing issues such as employment, job training, and worker protection.

However, President Bush has threatened to veto the bill in its current form. According to a White House statement of administration policy, the bill calls for around \$11 billion more in spending than the president proposed. If approved, the bill would increase discretionary spending for fiscal year 2008 by 9% and increase the budget deficit by 10%. The president has also threatened to veto any appropriations bill that provides more funding than he proposed.

President Bush has proposed a plan aimed at balancing the budget by 2012. In the administration's view, this can be achieved by restraining spending instead of increasing taxes. To be able to reach this goal, his administration proposes spending no more than \$933 billion in 2008.

The White House has stated that the 2008 appropriations bill departs from a "fiscally responsible path." However, Rep. David Obey (D-WI), who chaired the Appropriations Committee, said the bill represented a "disciplined set of investments." In Obey's opinion, the president wants to prevent these appropriations so that funding for the Iraq War and tax breaks for affluent Americans can continue. He added that the appropriations were designed to benefit working families.

President Bush's threat to veto the appropriations bill has already started to raise questions regarding whether his threat is justified. Critics have voiced doubts that the president's actions are truly motivated by a desire to restore fiscal discipline.