

# Military-Industrial Complex Clinches Nearly 450,000% Return on Investment

After Industry Gives \$10 Million to  
Congressional Defense Committee Members,  
DOD Receives Potential \$45 Billion Spending Increase



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Every year, the military-industrial complex donates millions of dollars to the campaigns of members of Congress, creating pressure on the legislative branch to fund specific weapons systems, maintain an extremely high Pentagon budget, and add ever more military spending. This upwards pressure is a constant, no matter what figure is requested by the president for the Pentagon, even though nearly 50% of the current Pentagon budget already goes to private contractors each year.<sup>1</sup>

Members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees are especially targeted by defense contractors. These committee members determine the amount of money authorized for the Pentagon when the committee marks up the annual defense policy bill, the National Defense Authorization Act.

Because of this critical position, defense contractors pour money into the reelection campaigns of these members, creating a self-fulfilling feedback loop that many call the “military-industrial-Congressional complex.” This year, the armed services committees voted to increase the Pentagon budget beyond the President’s \$813 billion request for the Pentagon for the coming fiscal year, a \$31 billion increase from the previous fiscal year, by an additional \$37.5 billion in the House and \$45 billion in the Senate.<sup>2</sup> This additional funding was not requested by President Biden nor the Department of Defense.

The analysis in this report shows that, in the current election cycle, the military-industrial complex gave \$10.2 million to members of the House and Senate Armed Services

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/social/corporate>

<sup>2</sup> See the end of this report for a full list of House and Senate Armed Services Committee members who voted to increase the defense budget and how much each received in defense sector contributions.

Committee prior to their votes this June to increase overall defense spending for FY23. (See Table 1.) The report relies on campaign finance data from OpenSecrets.org and includes contributions from defense sector employees and PACs to lawmakers’ reelection campaigns and leadership PACs.

**Table 1. Defense sector contributions to Armed Services Committee members who voted to increase defense spending, 2022 election cycle.**

	Contributions to Democrats	Contributions to Republicans	Grand Total
House Armed Services Committee	\$896,508	\$2,093,744	\$2,990,252
Senate Armed Services Committee	\$3,579,928	\$3,595,164	\$7,175,092
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$4,476,436</b>	<b>\$5,688,908</b>	<b>\$10,165,344</b>

*Source: Public Citizen analysis of campaign finance data from OpenSecrets.org*

The vast majority of these campaign contributions went to members who voted to increase the Pentagon budget above the president’s \$813 billion recommendation. Specifically, House Armed Services Committee members who voted “yes” to increasing the FY23 Pentagon budget by \$37.5 billion on June 22, 2022, received a total of \$3 million from the defense industry in the 2022 election cycle. Senate Armed Services Committee members who voted “yes” to increasing the FY23 Pentagon budget by \$45 billion on June 16, 2022, received a total of \$7.2 million from the defense industry in the 2022 election cycle.<sup>3</sup>

Notably, the average campaign contribution from the military-industrial complex to a member of the House or Senate Armed Services Committee who voted “yes” to increase military spending for FY23 is more than triple the average campaign contribution from the military-industrial complex to those who voted “no.” Those who voted “yes” received average contributions of \$151,722. Those who voted “no” received average contributions of \$42,967. (See Table 2.)

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<sup>3</sup> This report relies on data from OpenSecrets.org. House member contributions during the current election cycle include contributions from the past two years, Senate member contributions include contributions from the past six years. Both include contributions to campaign committees and leadership PACs.

**Table 2. Defense sector contributions to Senate and House Armed Services Committee members.**

	Lawmakers who voted to increase defense funding (number of votes)	Lawmakers who voted against increasing defense funding	Total	Average	% of total to lawmakers who voted to increase
House Armed Services Committee	\$2,990,252 (42)	\$718,534 (17)	\$3,708,786 (59)	\$62,861	81%
Senate Armed Services Committee	\$7,175,092 (25)	\$54,879 (1)	\$7,229,971 (26)	\$278,076	99%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,165,344</b>	<b>\$773,413</b>	<b>\$10,938,757</b>	<b>\$128,691</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$151,722</b>	<b>\$42,967</b>	<b>\$128,691</b>		

*Source: Public Citizen analysis of campaign finance data from OpenSecrets.org*

If the FY23 Pentagon budget ultimately enacted indeed reaches the amount approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee – an outcome that is likely given the trajectory of the budget in previous years – the defense contractors will have clinched a return on their \$10 million investment of 449,900%.

The military-industrial complex maintains a potent political influence machine that extends far beyond campaign spending, and there’s no reason to doubt that the supporters of more Pentagon spending believe in what they are doing. But nor should anyone doubt that military-industrial complex campaign contributions both reward and encourage Congress to shovel money at the Pentagon – even as so many human needs and non-military security interests (like addressing pandemics or climate chaos) remain desperately underfunded.

**Table 3. Defense sector contributions to House Armed Services Committee members who voted to increase defense spending, 2022 election cycle (campaign committee and leadership PAC contributions combined).**

U.S. House Representatives	Party	Contributions
Mike Rogers, Alabama, Ranking Member	R	\$404,525
Rob Wittman, Virginia, Vice Ranking Member	R	\$237,799
Mike Turner, Ohio	R	\$150,950
Joe Courtney, Connecticut	D	\$131,000
Elaine Luria, Virginia, Vice Chair	D	\$127,743
Jim Banks, Indiana	R	\$117,298
Donald Norcross, New Jersey	D	\$108,000
Don Bacon, Nebraska	R	\$105,733
Michael Waltz, Florida	R	\$98,221
Sam Graves, Missouri	R	\$82,950
Marc Veasey, Texas	D	\$82,250
James R. Langevin, Rhode Island	D	\$80,505
Liz Cheney, Wyoming	R	\$77,476
Mike Gallagher, Wisconsin	R	\$77,143
Doug Lamborn, Colorado	R	\$74,300
Elise Stefanik, New York	R	\$74,192
Mikie Sherrill, New Jersey	D	\$71,543
Anthony G. Brown, Maryland	D	\$66,750
Mo Brooks, Alabama	R	\$64,896
Trent Kelly, Mississippi	R	\$64,050
Ruben Gallego, Arizona	D	\$63,053
Vicky Hartzler, Missouri	R	\$62,276
Jack Bergman, Michigan	R	\$58,610
Joe Wilson, South Carolina	R	\$52,068
Jerry Carl, Alabama	R	\$45,850
Scott Franklin, Florida	R	\$43,100
Joe Morelle, New York	D	\$43,000
Kai Kahele, Hawaii	D	\$40,650
Stephanie Murphy, Florida	D	\$38,643
Lisa McClain, Michigan	R	\$36,721
Ronny Jackson, Texas	R	\$36,396
Mike Johnson, Louisiana	R	\$33,900
Blake Moore, Utah	R	\$31,325
Elissa Slotkin, Michigan	D	\$28,883
Austin Scott, Georgia	R	\$26,000
Pat Fallon, Texas	R	\$22,125
Steven Horsford, Nevada	D	\$11,015

U.S. House Representatives	Party	Contributions
Mark E. Green, Tennessee	R	\$7,359
Matt Gaetz, Florida	R	\$5,481
Jared Golden, Maine	D	\$3,473
Scott DesJarlais, Tennessee	R	\$3,000
Stephanie Bice, Oklahoma	R	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,990,252</b>

Source: Public Citizen analysis of campaign finance data from OpenSecrets.org

**Table 4. Defense sector contributions to Senate Armed Services Committee members who voted in favor of increasing defense spending, 2022 election cycle (campaign committee and leadership PAC contributions combined).**

U.S. Senators	Party	Contributions
Jim Inhofe, Oklahoma, Ranking Member	R	\$874,876
Jack Reed, Rhode Island, Chair	D	\$822,757
Tim Kaine, Virginia	D	\$616,152
Jeanne Shaheen, New Hampshire	D	\$467,032
Roger Wicker, Mississippi	R	\$409,842
Gary Peters, Michigan	D	\$382,832
Dan Sullivan, Alaska	R	\$355,291
Joni Ernst, Iowa	R	\$319,209
Deb Fischer, Nebraska	R	\$296,797
Thom Tillis, North Carolina	R	\$295,154
Angus King, Maine	I	\$275,600
Tommy Tuberville, Alabama	R	\$234,100
Mazie Hirono, Hawaii	D	\$233,837
Joe Manchin, West Virginia	D	\$225,862
Tom Cotton, Arkansas	R	\$214,691
Tammy Duckworth, Illinois	D	\$174,466
Mike Rounds, South Dakota	R	\$167,154
Jacky Rosen, Nevada	D	\$161,214
Rick Scott, Florida	R	\$137,213
Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee	R	\$132,267
Richard Blumenthal, Connecticut	D	\$118,580
Josh Hawley, Missouri	R	\$100,556
Mark Kelly, Arizona	D	\$67,879
Kevin Cramer, North Dakota	R	\$58,014
Kirsten Gillibrand, New York	D	\$33,717
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$7,175,092</b>

Source: Public Citizen analysis of campaign finance data from OpenSecrets.org