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What's in the billion-dollar paragraph behind the White House ballroom debate

By —

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Tucked into [the Republican legislation to fund Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), a \$1 billion paragraph is drawing attention and driving headlines.

([Here is the link](#), go to page 5.)

The proposal is for "\$1,000,000,000 for the purposes of security adjustments and upgrades, including within the perimeter fence of the White House Compound to support enhancements by the United States Secret Service relating to the East Wing Modernization Project."

That is a staggering lack of detail.

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The \$1 billion request is tied directly to the transformation of the East

Wing into a massive ballroom, though limited to "security"-related needs.

But these details leave open the idea that some security improvements, including below-ground work, could affect the building of the ballroom itself, and managing of those costs.

Purpose	Description	Amount
White House Complex Hardening	Investments in the above and below ground hardening requirements of the East Wing Modernization Project, which will afford needed protection for the President, his family, and visitors, along with the below-ground highest level security functions. This hardening includes bulletproof glass, drone detection technologies, chemical and other threat filtration and detection systems, and a host of other national security functions. Importantly, as the legislative text makes explicit, none of these funds will be used to support non-security improvements at the White House.	\$220,000,000
Visitors Screening Facility	Funding for a long overdue White House Visitor Screening Facility to ensure secure and efficient screening for staff, officials, visitors/tours, and large-scale events with ever-increasing numbers of complex visitors.	\$180,000,000
Training	Investments to train USSS agents in the modern threat environment and update the USSS's critical training facilities.	\$175,000,000
Enhancements for Protectee Security	Investments in security improvements for protectees, including investments to secure frequently visited venues facing heightened risk due to their public visibility and static nature.	\$175,000,000
Evolving Threats and Technology	Includes funds to support the Secret Service Special Operations Division and its work to counter drones, airspace incursions, unmanned systems, biological threats, and other emerging threats through investments in state-of-the-art technologies.	\$150,000,000
Events of National Significance	Funding for increased security measures to ensure safety at high profile national events that require significant planning, specialized training, advanced screening technologies, perimeter, and security assets. The deficit associated with these large-scale, public events is growing and investment is needed.	\$100,000,000
	Grand Total	\$1,000,000,000

This handout from the White House breaks down a \$1 billion White House security proposal. Photo by Lisa Desjardins/PBS News.

Today, the director of the Secret Service held a closed door briefing with Senate Republicans and responded to questions from lawmakers about the proposal.

What did he tell them the money was for? [I was able to obtain a copy of the list he gave senators.](#)

- **\$220 million: "White House Complex Hardening."** That is listed as above and below-ground security, including bulletproof glass, drone detection and "a host of other national security functions."
- **\$180 million: "Visitors Screening Facility."** The description defines such a facility ("secure and efficient screening") but does not provide more detail.
- **\$175 million: "Training."** This will be for the U.S. Secret Service and its facilities. No other details provided.
- **\$175 million: "Enhancements for Protectee Security."** Few details are given here, except that this could include "frequently visited venues."
- **\$150 million: "Evolving threats and technology."** This is said to be for special operations to counter drones, airspace intrusions, biological threats and other technological needs.
- **\$100 million: "Events of National Significance."** No specific events are mentioned here, just that this is about "large-scale" and high profile national events.

What do senators think? Republicans I spoke with seemed convinced that the White House needs more security. And some, like Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, told me they are more or less on board with this request.

But a significant group wants far more detail. That includes Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins, R-Maine, who told me, "I've asked for a lot more data."

What's next? This package is poised for a full Senate vote as soon as next week.