

Congress approves a \$2.1 billion emergency spending bill for Capitol security and aid for Afghan refugees.

By Luke Broadwater and Emily Cochrane

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WASHINGTON — Congress on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a \$2.1 billion emergency spending bill to pay for Capitol security costs stemming from the Jan. 6 attack and a push by the Biden administration to allow thousands of Afghans facing retribution for aiding American troops to be quickly evacuated to the United States.

The Senate voted 98 to 0 after leaders in both parties endorsed the stopgap spending bill, the product of weeks of wrangling between Republicans and Democrats over how broad the legislation should be, including the addition of more than \$1.1 billion for Afghan refugees.

The House immediately took up the bill and passed it 411 to 11, clearing it for President Biden's signature. Six of the most progressive Democrats and five Republicans, mostly from the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus, voted no.

Earlier, the White House issued a statement announcing the administration's support, suggesting that Mr. Biden would sign it.

The bill steers \$70.7 million to a U.S. Capitol Police force still reeling from the deadly riot, to cover the hiring of more officers, overtime and hazard pay, retention bonuses, mental health resources, training and equipment.

"The last six months have pushed those who protect the U.S. Capitol to the limits," said Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York and the majority leader. "In the face of unprecedented adversity, they responded heroically. We must support them now, as they so courageously supported us."

The measure also provides \$521 million to reimburse the National Guard for its response at the Capitol during the mob violence and months of patrolling afterward; \$300 million for security upgrades to the complex, including hardening windows and doors and adding a new camera system; and \$35.4 million for other agencies that helped respond.

On the House floor, Representative Rosa DeLauro, Democrat of Connecticut and the chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, endorsed the bill, but argued that it fell short of the Capitol complex's security needs. She noted that the Senate had stripped out money to prosecute those who stormed the building and for the creation of a quick reaction force of the National Guard, among other items.

"This bill is not perfect, but time is running short and the immediate need is dire," Ms. DeLauro said. "In those harrowing moments of Jan. 6, the men and women of the Capitol Police protected us. Now we must protect them."

Final passage came days after police officers who defended the Capitol that day told an investigative committee in excruciating detail of the horrors they endured when a pro-Trump mob stormed the building. Since the attack, the Capitol Police force has been in a state of crisis, with funding, staffing and operational problems plaguing a deeply demoralized agency.

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"Today is a major step toward making necessary improvements for our department, supporting our work force and carrying out our critical mission," the force's chief, J. Thomas Manger, said in a statement on Thursday.

Understand the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan

Who are the Taliban? The Taliban arose in 1994 amid the turmoil that came after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989. They used brutal public punishments, including floggings, amputations and mass executions, to enforce their rules. Here's more on their origin story and their record as rulers.

Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont and the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, had been warning for weeks that the agency was in danger of running out of money and canceling necessary training if Congress did not quickly approve more funding.

“If we do not act, the Capitol Police will deplete salaries funding in a matter of weeks, and the National Guard will be forced to cancel needed training to carry out their mission at home and abroad,” he said on Thursday. “Doing nothing would be a security crisis entirely of our own making.”

The legislation passed after several Republicans who had been holding it up dropped their objections and the Senate agreed to a proposal by Senator Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas, to require the administration to report to Congress on the Afghan special immigrant visa program.

The bill incorporates a measure passed by the House last week that adds 8,000 new visas for Afghans facing death threats from the Taliban for helping American personnel in Afghanistan as U.S. forces withdraw after a 20-year war. The House overwhelmingly approved the measure, which also expedites the application process and allows more Afghans to qualify. It also includes hundreds of millions of dollars for government programs that aid refugees and migrants and resettle them in the United States.

More than 18,000 Afghans who have worked as interpreters, drivers, engineers, security guards, fixers and embassy clerks for the United States during the war have been caught in bureaucratic limbo after applying for special immigrant visas, which are available to people who face threats because of work for the U.S. government.

“We intend to keep our nation’s promises to brave Afghans who have taken great risks to help America and our partners fight the terrorists,” Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the minority leader, said in floor remarks this week.