

# Defense Lobby Tries to Steer Ship, Jet Cash Around Social Issues

By Kate Ackley | July 14, 2023 7:04AM ET



Lobbyists for the biggest defense contractors usually focused on getting more cash for jets, tankers and ships are caught in a conflict over abortion and other divisive social issues.

House conservatives vow to block the annual defense authorization bill if their amendments to limit abortion, transgender health care, and diversity initiatives aren't attached to the typically bipartisan bill.

The Senate takes up its version next week without the contentious add-ons, setting up an arduous conference.

Lobbyists may also contend with potential automatic cuts to Defense Department appropriations and a possible supplemental spending measure that's drawn conservative ire.

Pentagon contractors have little to say about the social issues, but worry they'll derail legislation setting military policy and funding.

"To say that it's an unusual year just understates the situation," said Jim Dyer, a lobbyist with Baker Donelson, whose clients this year included [Lockheed Martin](#) and [General Dynamics](#).

Lisa Whisler, a partner at Capitol Counsel who leads the firm's defense practice, said in the two decades she's been involved in defense policy and legislation, this year presents the most hot-button social issues for defense clients to navigate.

"The defense industry, the defense community is steering away from those issues and just really sticking to getting platforms, getting programs authorized and letting Congress iron out and handle some of the more contentious issues," said Whisler, a former in-house lobbyist for Lockheed who counted the company among her firm's clients this year.

Companies that build the military's weapons are a powerful lobby.

Lockheed was the top recipient of unclassified DOD contracts in fiscal 2022, according to Bloomberg Government contracting data. It spent \$16.7 million on federal lobbying in the past 15 months, second only to [Boeing](#), which disclosed almost \$16.9 million on lobbying during the same period. Likewise, [Raytheon](#), General Dynamics and [Northrop Grumman](#) all spent upwards of \$13 million on lobbying over the past 15 months.

## Top Defense Contractors Spend Heavily on Federal Lobbying

Boeing spent the most on federal lobbying in the past 15 months.

**FY22 DOD  
contract  
revenue**

	<b>Company</b>	<b>Lobbying spending Jan. 2022-March 2023</b>
\$45.7B	Lockheed Martin Corp.	\$16.7M
25.7B	Raytheon Technologies Corp.	13.8M
21.9B	General Dynamics Corp.	14.6M
16.7B	Pfizer Inc.	16.0M
14.5B	Boeing Co.	16.9M
13.8B	Northrop Grumman Corp.	14.6M

Sources: Bloomberg Government; congressional lobbying disclosures

Bloomberg Government

Covid vaccine maker [Pfizer](#), the fourth largest DOD contractor in fiscal 2022 as the government responded to the pandemic, reported spending more than \$16 million on federal lobbying between January 2022 and March of this year.

While it's hard to break out how much of the lobbying focused on the Pentagon, it's safe to assume a large share went to influence the DOD's nearly \$900 billion in annual spending. They also regularly lobby on other major issues debated on Capitol Hill.

Despite the partisan fights, Whisler said she's optimistic the House and Senate will pass their versions and work out the differences.

But if it stretches into the end of the year, it wouldn't be the first time in the bill's 60-year history of passing without fail.

"There are some years that we're buying our holiday gifts in the Capitol gift shop," Whisler admitted.

**Hot sauce and "Groundhog Day" jokes are just some of the highlights in emails from two House aides** leading coalitions that link GOP leadership with business interests and conservative organizations holding a stake in the chamber's agenda. They also offer a trove of legislative intelligence.

Hailey Borden and Jason Rogers, who head those coalitions for House Majority Whip Tom Emmer (R-Minn.), organize meetings with lawmakers and lobbyists, as they work to round up the votes for legislation on the floor with a slim majority and a GOP that is shifting away from big business interests. We spoke to them about how they do it — jokes included. [Read more.](#)

***Latinos are making significant gains in landing jobs in Senate Democratic offices***, as a diversity report released yesterday by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) shows.

Many lawmakers now have personal staffs where one out of five aides identify as Latino. In some offices more than 40% of senators' staffs are Latino, according to the report.

Nancy Ognaovich dug in to the numbers and talked with senators about Latino staffers' growing clout. [Read more.](#)

## Today's Floor Agenda

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***The House is back at 9 a.m. to continue considering the annual defense policy bill.***

The chamber will debate remaining amendments from the 80 proposals made in order under [second rule](#) for the \$886 billion authorization measure ([H.R. 2670](#), see the [BGOV Bill Summary](#)).

Lawmakers adopted several GOP amendments that would essentially ban the Pentagon's [abortion travel and leave policies](#), bar transgender troop care, and curtail diversity efforts at the Defense Department. Those changes have alienated Democrats and jeopardized the bill's passage while putting GOP lawmakers from more moderate districts in peril, [Billy House and Erik Wasson report](#).

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Democratic Whip Katherine Clark, and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar all say that they will oppose the NDAA, [Janine Phakdeetham reports](#). House Armed Services ranking member Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and subcommittee ranking members [issued a statement](#) saying they'd now oppose the bill, which the panel approved by a 58-1 vote last month, because what's been adopted on the floor.

Members rejected Republican amendments that would have cut off security assistance to Ukraine, as [Roxana Tiron reported](#), which could make it harder to get the votes among the GOP Conference for passage.

Votes are slated to begin around 10:15 a.m., according to the [daily schedule](#) from Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-La.), with

**House appropriators will mark up more spending bills today** in the [Commerce-Justice-Science](#) and [Labor-HHS-Education](#) subcommittees.

The FBI's budget would be cut under the C-J-S bill released by House Republicans yesterday, as GOP lawmakers accuse the law enforcement agency of bias against conservatives. [Read more](#) from Jack Fitzpatrick.

House Republicans proposed slashing dozens of federal programs in House appropriators' Labor-HHS-Education bill released yesterday, as they seek to rein in what they view as government waste. Alex Ruoff [breaks down the bill](#).

Republican appropriators would also dramatically cut the Labor Department budget by 29% in the bill. The DOL would receive \$9.8 billion in discretionary appropriations in fiscal year 2024, a \$4 billion cut to the current funding level, Diego Areas Munhoz [reports](#).

**For a list of today's hearings and markups, [click here](#). Track committee votes on bills and nominations [here](#).**

## Next Week's Highlights

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**The Senate version of the annual defense policy bill is headed to the floor** after the chamber reconvenes next Tuesday. Senators cast their first procedural vote on the bill then, according to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). The chamber will also consider a "China competition" package amendment, Schumer said yesterday.

"I am willing to ensure we consider and vote a reasonable number of amendments," he said.

The Senate Armed Services Committee filed its version of the bill ([S. 2226](#)) earlier this week, which includes provisions to reduce the number of active-duty Air Force and Navy personnel to relieve recruitment struggles, and change reviews of medical malpractice claims. Roxana Tiron [has more details](#).

**Reauthorizing the FAA tops the House agenda** next week. The chamber is again moving ahead of the Senate with its [841-page bill \(H.R. 3935\)](#), which seeks to pare agency bureaucracy, address aviation workforce shortages, and advance new flying technology. The Rules Committee collected amendments earlier this week.

House lawmakers also plan to vote on a bill ([H.R. 3941](#)) to restrict the use of public school facilities to provide shelter for immigrants who haven't been admitted to the US

**A bill to require Supreme Court justices to adopt a code of conduct (S. 359)** is scheduled for markup in the Senate Judiciary Committee [on Thursday](#).

**Appropriators meet to mark up more fiscal 2024 spending bills next week.** The full Senate committee [scheduled a Thursday meeting](#) on the Energy and Water, State-Foreign Operations, and Transportation-HUD bills. The full House Appropriations Committee will mark up its Transportation-HUD bill [on Tuesday](#).

**Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is among witnesses set to testify for another hearing** in House Republicans' Weaponization of the Federal Government Subcommittee [on Thursday](#), which will examine "the federal government's role in censoring Americans, the *Missouri v. Biden* case, and Big Tech's collusion with out-of-control government agencies to silence speech."

— With assistance from Jack Fitzpatrick, Zach C. Cohen, and Roxana Tiron.

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