

U.S. Earmarks \$250M to Counter Russian Influence

March 22, 2018



Leah Millis / Reuters

A massive U.S. government spending bill unveiled on Wednesday has earmarked \$250 million to counter Russian influence in the wake of allegations about Russia's meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

A U.S. Special Counsel [indicted](#) 13 Russian nationals and three Russian entities last month on charges of defrauding the U.S. government by interfering in the political process. The counsel and congressional committees are investigating thousands of Russian ads on Facebook and Twitter, which are believed to have [fanned](#) tensions during the presidential campaign.

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“[N]ot less than \$250,000,000 shall be made available to carry out the purposes of the Countering Russian Influence Fund,” [reads](#) the text of the more than 2,000-page spending

bill.

The \$1.3 trillion bill, which faces a Friday deadline for passage, also includes \$380 million to help safeguard U.S. voting systems from cyber attacks. The allocation would be one of Congress' first concrete steps to bolstering election security since the 2016 presidential campaign was marred by allegations of Russian meddling.

The spending bill also includes a \$307 million increase over the Trump administration's request for the FBI's budget, which appropriators said would be used in part for counter-intelligence efforts to protect against Russia cyber attacks.

Americans vote in November in midterm elections, which U.S. intelligence officials have repeatedly warned in recent weeks could be targeted by Russia or others seeking to disrupt the process.

It was not immediately clear when the funding would be made available or if it would be delivered in time to make a difference for states ahead of the 2018 midterm elections.

The Department of Homeland said last year that 21 states had experienced initial probing of their election systems from Russian hackers in 2016 and that a small number of networks were compromised. It said there is no evidence any votes were actually altered.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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