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## OBAMA IMMIGRATION BUDGET UNDERSCORES DEEP DIVISION WITH THE GOP

By Rebecca Ballhaus  
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President Barack Obama's budget proposal would increase spending on border security and customs enforcement – while presuming a nearly \$160 billion deficit reduction over 10 years due to stronger economic growth that it says would result from an overhaul of immigration law that has little chance of passing Congress.

Mr. Obama's nearly \$4 trillion budget proposal includes nearly \$374 million for border security, an increase of \$90 million from current funding levels for the Department of Homeland Security. The funding, among other things, would pay for new technology on the border and 2,300 additional customs officers.

Immigration is a fierce battleground between the White House and Congress, especially after Mr. Obama acted unilaterally last year to give more than four million illegal immigrants a chance to apply for work permits and a temporary reprieve from deportation, a move that prompted swift condemnation from congressional Republicans.

Even before lawmakers address Mr. Obama's budget proposal for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, they're certain to undertake a different fight over immigration. Because of Mr. Obama's action shielding many illegal immigrants, the GOP-led Congress has funded the Department of Homeland Security only through Feb. 27. Republicans want to use that deadline as leverage to unravel Mr. Obama's unilateral actions, and Mr. Obama is likely to veto legislation that does so.

The president on Monday struck a confrontational tone as he asked Republicans to approve funding for the agency.

Mr. Obama's budget for the next fiscal year counts on savings it says would materialize if Congress passed an overhaul of immigration laws akin to a bill the Senate approved in 2013. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the Senate legislation would reduce the deficit by nearly \$160 billion in the first decade after its passage and by nearly \$1 trillion over the following two decades.

Among other things, granting legal status to undocumented immigrants would lead to higher earnings and an increase in tax compliance, factors that would help shrink the deficit, said David Dysegaard Kallick, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan Fiscal Policy Institute.

In his budget proposal, Mr. Obama seeks to increase funding to some countries, including El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, to address the "root causes" of illegal immigration to the U.S. Those countries were among the largest sources of an influx of minors who sought to cross the border illegally last year.

The proposal calls for \$1 billion to "support a long-term, comprehensive strategy" for Central America to boost the region's economy and security, with the goal of reducing illegal immigration to the U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, in an op-ed in *The New York Times* last

week, said the proposed funding would nearly triple the current level provided to Central America.

“Six million young Central Americans are to enter the labor force in the next decade,” Mr. Biden wrote. “If opportunity isn’t there for them, the entire Western Hemisphere will feel the consequences.”

The proposal also calls for \$142 million in funding for Mexico, which would go toward improving the country’s enforcement efforts on its border with the U.S.

Overall, Mr. Obama’s budget includes \$41.2 billion in discretionary funding for the Homeland Security department, which would also ramp up the agency’s funding for airport security and the Secret Service.