Biden Budget Proposal Advances AI Priorities

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On March 11, 2024, US President Joe Biden released his Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget request, which included proposals on U.S. Artificial Intelligence (AI) development and efforts to implement the Biden Administration's Executive Order (EO) on AI. The budget identifies the National Science Foundation (NSF) as central to U.S. leadership in AI, requesting $10.2 billion in funding for the agency. $2 billion of that total would be dedicated to research and development (R&D) in accordance with CHIPS Act priorities, including AI, and $30 million would support the National AI Research Resource pilot program. The budget also requests $65 million for the Commerce Department "to safeguard, regulate, and promote AI, including protecting the American public against its societal risks." This funding would include directing the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to establish the U.S. AI Safety Institute. The institute would be responsible for operationalizing "NIST's AI Risk Management Framework by creating guidelines, tools, benchmarks, and best practices for evaluating and mitigating dangerous capabilities and conducting evaluations including red-teaming to identify and mitigate AI risk." Further, the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science, which is responsible for implementing aspects of both the CHIPS Act and the AI EO, would receive $8.6 billion under the President's proposed budget.

In addition to NSF, NIST, and the DOE Office of Science, the budget outlines other agency priorities for implementing the AI EO. President Biden requested $2 million to support Department of Justice (DOJ) initiatives under the AI EO and funding for the Department of Labor and the Treasury Department to appoint Chief AI Officers. The Department of Agriculture request includes $365 million for R&D, "including the responsible application of [AI] to" the U.S. agricultural industry. The budget request also emphasizes the importance of funding Department of Education efforts to incorporate AI in schools and postsecondary institutions. The Department of Health and Human Services would receive $5 million to open an AI office, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development would be provided $86 million for fair housing programs, including combatting AI-enabled housing discrimination. Finally, the budget requests $20 million in "targeted [AI] investments" for the State Department, funding for the Transportation Department's Office of Automation Safety to assess AI and vehicle cybersecurity risks, and Department of Veterans Affairs investments in AI for veteran care.

Separately, the DOE request contains "$455 million to extend the frontiers of AI for science and technology and to increase AI's safety, security, and resilience." These funds would include cybersecurity initiatives and the development of testbeds for foundation models. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) proposed $25.4 billion budget would include R&D funding for AI-enhanced aviation and space technologies.

But as they say, the President proposes, and the Congress disposes. Federal funding authority lies with the US Congress, which will develop its own FY 2025 funding bills. House and Senate lawmakers have organized working groups aimed at increasing education around AI issues. Republicans and Democrats across both chambers are developing legislative proposals related to AI, but Congressional leaders believe that while lawmakers will file new bills, and stand-alone, targeted bills may be enacted, omnibus AI legislation is unlikely to advance until after the November elections at the earliest.

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