



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025

No. 34

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, February 21, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, You are our hope for the years to come. Today, bless our Senators. Give them wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties. Help them to possess the faith and courage to seek Your plans. Use them to bring peace where discord reigns and to inspire the nations of the world.

Lord, lead them through the obstacles they will face to the fulfillment of Your loving providence. Infuse them with reverential awe for You. Make and keep their inner lives pure and kind and just. May their highest motive be not to win over one another but to win with one another.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SETTING FORTH THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND SETTING FORTH THE APPROPRIATE BUDGETARY LEVELS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026 THROUGH 2034

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con Res. 7, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 7) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2025 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2026 through 2034.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

OVERSIGHT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I take Congress's constitutional oversight mandate very seriously. What you learn in eighth grade civics, oversight responsibility is checks and balances of government.

In the 118th Congress, as ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee, I established the committee's very first Oversight and Investigative Unit. Its oversight touched on 97 percent of government taxpayer-funded

Agencies, sending over 600 oversight letters to Federal, State, and private sector entities.

Last year, my team sent over one letter per day, on average. That oversight unit launched the committee's first subpoena since 1991, and I obtained records uncovering brandnew information about Credit Suisse's servicing of Nazi accounts. I thank then-Chairman WHITEHOUSE for issuing that subpoena.

I hosted, also, oversight roundtables where whistleblowers exposed the Biden administration's failure at the southern border to collect DNA and protect unaccompanied children. My investigation resulted in a referral to law enforcement to find and protect unaccompanied children who were brought here in violation of our laws. But the Federal Government had a responsibility to make sure that they were protected.

My oversight team made records public and performed interviews to ensure accountability following the assassination attempt of President Trump in Pennsylvania. I published data for an EPA grant program showing most taxpayers' money wasn't spent like the law required.

My oversight also uncovered abuses by the FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force; FBI political bias in the Hunter Biden investigation and prosecution; the Obama-Biden State Department obstruction of law enforcement efforts against Iran; wasted money on misclassified ATF employees; private equity investments exploiting healthcare and damaging hospitals, even in Ottumwa, IA; Department of

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S1061

Justice's shortchanging the Crime Victims' Fund so those victims didn't get the money that they were entitled to; excessive DOD spending on spare parts and price-gouging.

In response to that, I got legislation passed to fix that problem. My oversight team also worked to protect whistleblowers and force government Agencies to amend their policies to comply with Federal whistleblower laws.

So we are in the 119th Congress, and as this Congress gets underway, I have become chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My oversight work is already full speed ahead, and I look forward to what the next couple of years produce because we want to guarantee the executive branch faithfully executes the laws as the Constitution requires and to expose waste, fraud, and abuse and the wasting of taxpayers' money.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

S. CON. RES. 7

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, Mr. President, the Senate is in for a very long day and a very long night. Over the next day or so, Senate Republicans will try to advance a budget resolution that clears the way to cut taxes for Donald Trump's billionaire friends. Democrats are going to hold the floor all day long and all night long to expose how Republicans want to cut taxes for billionaires while gutting things Americans care about most: healthcare, jobs, public safety, national security, housing, education. This is going to be a long, drawn-out fight.

This reconciliation budget bill is only the first step, albeit an important one. Days like today, where we vote on amendments late into the night, go a long way in revealing where each party stands and whom each party is fighting for. Democrats are glad to have this debate. We are happy to have it a few more times if the Republican leader so wants. Democrats will show, in each of these debates, where Republicans truly stand deep down—not with working people but on the side of billionaires like Elon Musk.

If you become wealthy fairly and squarely, we don't begrudge you, but you are doing fine, and you certainly don't need a massive tax break. And yet that is precisely what Republicans are getting ready to do—give billionaires another tax break and make the American people pay the cost.

If Senate Republicans really think the best solution for inflation is to put more money into the pockets of the

billionaire class, Democrats will make sure the American people know it. We will expose the Republicans' plan to cut healthcare so that billionaires can have another tax break. We will expose Republican plans to gut housing, to defund the NIH—stop cancer research? Stop research into diseases that are hurting, harming, and even killing our loved ones? Uh-uh. To cut nutrition? To make housing costs go up? To hurt food inspection? To stop the fight against bird flu here or Ebola overseas so that they don't harm us? Doing all those things that make no sense so they can cut taxes for billionaires? No way, we say. That is wrong for the American people, and the more they learn about it, the less they are going to like the Trump agenda that Republicans in the Senate are following.

Republicans can spin their agenda however they want. They can try to pass 1 bill, 2 bills, 50 bills. It doesn't matter. They can slice and dice their policies in whatever order they wish. It doesn't matter in the end. The end game is the same of Donald Trump and the Republican majority: tax cuts for billionaires paid on the backs of working and middle-class Americans.

That is not—absolutely not—what the American people signed up for. The American people want to see inflation go down. It has gone up in the last month, even though Donald Trump said it would go down starting on day one. They want to see their paychecks go up. They want to see more jobs. They want to see better jobs. They want to see more ladders to the middle class, and they want to find ways to stay in the middle class once they get there.

Republicans, meanwhile, have abandoned the working and middle class. In just 1 month, Donald Trump and Republicans have eviscerated so many of our institutions in order to cater to the whims of billionaires. Donald Trump has defied the rule of law. He has ignored court orders. He has even fancied himself a King, while all his billionaire friends spread through the government like locusts and put public services that serve tens of millions of people at risk.

When Elon Musk holds court in the Oval Office and meets heads of state, Head Start programs and community health centers have seen their funding shut off. Donald Trump preaches about corruption and fraud, all the while riding the government of its independent watchdogs and letting DOGE go through people's Social Security numbers and even their private tax and health data with virtually no guardrails, no check.

All this chaos is by design. All this lawlessness has a goal. Everything we have seen over the last month from Donald Trump and Republicans has one endgame in mind: Undermine the rule of law in order to put more money in the pockets of billionaires like Elon Musk. Nothing criticizes the broken core of the Republicans' agenda better

than their tax cuts for the ultrawealthy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, having just seen the Democrat leader come to the floor to talk about the Senate budget resolution, and what I heard the minority leader say was that none of it is accurate.

Let me tell you: I have the budget resolution with me—the key portions—five pages long. That is it—five pages long. Every American can read it. They can read it for themselves. The resolution focuses on three things and three things only: No. 1, securing the border; No. 2, restoring peace through strength; No. 3, unleashing American energy. It is not complicated. It is common sense. Americans overwhelmingly support these goals. That is why Republicans in the Senate are moving forward.

So let's talk about border security.

This budget allocates \$175 billion to secure our border. Now, that includes funding for President Trump's successful Executive orders to deport criminal illegal immigrants. Border Patrol agents and ICE agents need the resources to do it. There are currently more than 600,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records in the country today. President Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem are moving at lightning speed. They are moving to deport them. They are moving to make our communities safer. Their strong actions have led to double the number of arrests of illegal criminal immigrants compared to the arrests under President Biden. These arrests are making our communities safer, and they are sending a message to would-be illegal immigrants all around the world to "don't come here." Actually, these people are turning around and going back to their own homes. Illegal border crossings between the United States and Mexico are at their lowest rates in the last 5 years.

The actions of President Trump are working. They are working so well that the Trump administration says it is running out of money for deportations. Border czar Tom Homan told us just that. Secretary Noem told us that as well. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth told us that. Attorney General Pam Bondi has told us that.

Senate Republicans are acting quickly to get the administration the resources that they have requested and that they need. The budget will allow us to finish the wall. It also takes the steps we need for more border agents. It means more detention beds. That

alone will keep dangerous criminals off the streets. It means more deportation flights. That way, we can get dangerous criminals out of our country.

Now, let's talk about national security because the reconciliation bill that we are talking about allocates \$150 billion to restore American peace through strength.

We live in a dangerous world. The threats against the United States are higher than we have seen in decades. There is a threat of terrorism. You saw the danger of terrorism in New Orleans earlier this year. There is the threat from the Chinese Communist Party. They are rapidly building up their military. Meanwhile, over the past 4 years, weak leadership from the previous administration undermined our military and our military strength. There is a real threat today from Iran. They are the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world, and they are also racing toward a nuclear bomb.

Weakness invites conflict. Strength deters war. This budget is a big step toward rebuilding our military, to protecting our Nation, and we need to do that after 4 years of weakness.

We are already seeing a surge of young people who want to join the military. Recruitments are up. Under President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, recruitment is at its highest levels in 15 years.

With this budget, America will be stronger. Our military will be more lethal and more intimidating.

Now let's talk about energy and American energy dominance. This bill will take the handcuffs—the handcuffs—off of American energy producers. The previous administration caused painfully high prices with its energy mistakes, its blunders. It locked up affordable, reliable, American-made energy. We can never forget Joe Biden saying he wanted the EPA to prioritize climate over American energy, energy that was affordable, available, and reliable. Terrible mistake. Wrong for the Nation. We are here to correct that.

Families suffered from soaring prices. The economy struggled under those regulations of the previous administration. Passing this budget allows us to reject the energy failures of the last 4 years. It puts a premium on energy that is affordable, reliable, and American.

The Federal Government will also see its revenues increase as we produce more American energy. And the Presiding Officer knows that Wyoming is America's energy breadbasket. America is a superpower of energy, and we need to act like it.

If you listen to the Senate Democrats, it is abundantly clear that they don't support these goals of American energy dominance. They don't. They haven't. They still don't.

Democrats also are opposed to securing our border. They are opposed to rebuilding our military. They are opposed to unleashing American energy.

They are standing in the way of commonsense priorities that Americans overwhelmingly support. They are a party in a panic mode. Their high prices and their open border agenda are completely out of touch with the American people.

Now, Democrats used this very process, reconciliation, a few years ago. And what was their purpose? They wanted to raise taxes and pass trillions of dollars in wasteful Washington spending. They wasted taxpayer money. They subsidized electric vehicles for the rich. They sent stimulus checks to criminals like the Boston Marathon bomber. It is almost unbelievable.

The Federal Government is too big. It spends too much. Republicans will end this wasteful Washington spending. We will get America back on track. After 4 years of high prices and open borders, our Nation and Americans deserve a path to safety and prosperity. Starting with this Republican budget, that is what the American people will finally get.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF KASHYAP PATEL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it has been 1 month since President Trump took the oath of office. Since January 20, the Senate has been hard at work confirming the President's Cabinet nominees—18 confirmed so far. President Trump has more of his team in place today than any President has had at this point since 2001, and we have done this despite obstruction by Democrats. Every nominee has received a fair process, as promised, and the Senate will continue to keep its foot on the gas until President Trump's Cabinet table is full.

Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote to confirm Kash Patel to be Director of the FBI. Mr. Patel will lead the Nation's primary Federal law enforcement Agency at a critical time. We have seen a heightened threat of terrorism in the homeland. Illegal drugs continue to come across the southern border and take the lives of too many Americans. Violent crime spiked in recent years, and it is still a problem in many parts of the country. At the same time, the FBI has lost the trust of many Americans who fear the Agency has become politicized.

Mr. President, Kash Patel has spent his career working in criminal law and national security. He spent his first 8 years after law school as a public defender in State and Federal courts in Florida.

In 2014, he was brought on as a terrorism prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice, prosecuting terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and al-Shabaab.

From there, he went to work in national security for the House Intelligence Committee and then in the first Trump administration. He worked on the National Security Council, where he handled hostage rescues, among other sensitive missions.

He also served as Principal Deputy for the Acting Director of National Intelligence and later as Chief of Staff for the Acting Secretary of Defense.

Mr. President, as I said, the FBI has lost trust among the American people in recent years. Much of that stems from a perception that politics has infected the FBI's important work, and it is not hard to see why. In just the last few years, the FBI field office in Richmond, VA, circulated a memo suggesting that traditional Catholics could be violent extremists. In 2021, the Attorney General infamously obstructed the FBI to work with local law enforcement to target parents who attended school board meetings. Of course, there is the FBI's apparent double standard when it comes to investigating President Trump and its repeated failures to cooperate with congressional Republicans.

Mr. President, the next Director of the FBI needs to focus on rooting out politics so the FBI can enforce the law, uphold the Constitution, and keep Americans safe.

The Bureau also needs a renewed focus on empowering the FBI's field offices to be good partners to local law enforcement. I am encouraged that Mr. Patel has the support of the National Police Association, the National Sheriffs' Association, and multiple State attorneys general—all of whom will be his partners in law enforcement should Mr. Patel be confirmed.

We have unfortunately seen that no community is immune from crime, terrorism, or illegal drugs, and we need all law enforcement working together and focused on the real threats facing our country.

I look forward to working with Mr. Patel to restore the integrity of the FBI and get it focused on its critical mission.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

Mr. President, one of the most significant accomplishments of the first Trump administration was the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

This comprehensive bill reduced tax rates for every income bracket, doubled the child tax credit, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and enacted pro-growth policies for American businesses of all sizes. And what were the results? A growing economy, higher paychecks for hard-working families, millions of new jobs, small business growth, higher-than-expected Federal revenues. That is right: higher than expected.

Government revenues since the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act have exceeded projections by roughly half a trillion dollars. An end to corporate inversions, which is the practice of moving U.S. company operations overseas for tax purposes. Practically every aspect of the U.S. economy was strengthened by this pro-growth legislation.

Contrary to what my friends across the aisle like to claim, it was middle-class families, not wealthy Americans, who received the largest proportional benefit of the tax cuts.

Now, let me just repeat that. It was middle-class families, not wealthy Americans, who received the largest proportional benefit of the tax cuts.

Working families benefited from this legislation. Working families ended up with more money in their pockets. Working families had more breathing room because of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Anyone who pretends that this wasn't the case is either ignorant of the law or being deliberately deceptive.

The income tax cuts for individuals are expiring at the end of this year, along with a key small business tax cut called the section 199A passthrough deduction.

And one of our top priorities for this year is extending this tax relief—but not just extending it, making it permanent.

As I and several other Finance Committee Republicans noted last week in a letter on this subject, “A temporary extension of these pro-growth and pro-family policies is a missed opportunity. Businesses need certainty while investing in their companies and taxpayers should not fear tax hikes due to congressional inaction.”

That is it in a nutshell. Hard-working Americans shouldn't have to live in fear of a tax hike every few years, and businesses need a clear picture of the tax outlook so that they can plan for the long term.

Making the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act permanent would protect hard-working families from uncertainty and ensure that they can keep more money in their pockets, and it would have significant economic long-term benefits.

The National Federation of Independent Business reports that making the small business section 199A deduction permanent would result in the creation of an additional 1.2 million jobs annually, with that number climbing as the law goes on.

And the Tax Foundation reports that long-run gross domestic product would increase by a substantial 1.1 percent. The President has called for making the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act permanent, and I am committed to ensuring any tax bill we consider does exactly that.

We have a real opportunity to improve the lives of Americans both here and now and for the long term, and we can't waste it.

Needless to say, drafting major tax legislation takes time. Senator CRAPO, the chairman for the Finance Committee, has been doing an incredible

job of laying the groundwork for a permanent Tax Cuts and Jobs Act extension, but there is still substantial work left to do to arrive at a bicameral agreement. We have to take the time to get it and do it right.

As we continue to move full steam ahead on this key part of the President's agenda, however, there are other pressing priorities that need to be addressed immediately.

When the President's border czar was here last week, he emphasized that the administration cannot sustain its effort to deport criminals here illegally without additional funding. And the last thing that we want is to delay other parts of the President's agenda, like border security, while we do the work needed to arrive at a tax agreement that can pass both Houses of Congress.

That is why the Senate is moving forward on a two-part legislative plan to accomplish our—and the President's—top priorities.

The first bill we consider will address immediate needs like securing the border and other key national security priorities. The second will focus on making tax relief permanent.

The budget resolution we are taking up this week will address the border security part of the equation, and then we will take up a second budget resolution for the tax portion. I want to thank Chairman GRAHAM for doing the work to get today's resolution to the floor, and I look forward to passing it later this week.

I look forward to taking up that second budget resolution as well in the not-too-distant future to prevent a \$4 trillion tax hike on hard-working Americans and making the individual and small business tax relief from the Tax Cuts and Job Acts permanent.

I yield the floor.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Patel nomination be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 23, Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

John Thune, John R. Curtis, Steve Daines, Tim Sheehy, Marsha Blackburn, Eric Schmitt, John Boozman, James E. Risch, Mike Crapo, Tommy Tuberville, Mike Rounds, Roger F. Wicker, Jim Justice, Markwayne

Mullin, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James Lankford.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Grassley	Moreno
Barrasso	Hagerty	Mullin
Blackburn	Hawley	Murkowski
Britt	Hoeven	Paul
Budd	Husted	Ricketts
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Risch
Cassidy	Johnson	Rounds
Cornyn	Justice	Schmitt
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cramer	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lee	Sheehy
Cruz	Lummis	Sullivan
Curtis	Marshall	Thune
Daines	McConnell	Tillis
Ernst	McCormick	Tuberville
Fischer	Moody	Wicker
Graham	Moran	Young

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Collins	Lujan	Smith
Coons	Markey	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—2

Boozman Fetterman

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 47.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kashyap Patel, of Nevada, to be Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a term of ten years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

RETIREMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have never liked calling too much attention to today's date, February 20, but I figured my birthday would be as good a day as any to share with our colleagues a decision I made last year.