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## Senate

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.

Our Father, thank You for Your patience. You listen to our prayers even when we have insufficient faith. Guide our steps, particularly when we attempt to shape our own destiny.

Today, lead our lawmakers to the successful fulfillment of Your purposes. As they strive to honor You, strengthen them with an endurance that will keep them strong in the face of complex challenges. Lord, make them grateful that You have given them the honor of serving You and country.

And, Lord, bless Senator KEVIN CRAMER with Your healing hands.

We pray in Your mighty 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). The Senator from Iowa.

### TRIBUTE TO RON STEELE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today, I come to the Senate floor to congratulate a legend in the broadcasting business. Ron Steele is a longtime journalist from my hometown TV station KWWL in Waterloo, IA. Tomorrow

will be his last day behind the anchor desk after more than 50 years of bringing news, weather, and sports to Iowans.

Over the years, he has interviewed newsmakers from around the world and across our State, spanning U.S. Presidents, Nobel laureates, Olympic medalists, and hometown athletes. Iowa's families in the Cedar Valley looked forward to his weekly coverage of "Friday Night Heroes." He also launched a public affairs program called "The Steele Report," where he interviewed more than 400 people, including this U.S. Senator.

As an avid news consumer, I hold Ron's work in high regard. He has received recognition for his outstanding work, including the prestigious Jack Shelley Award from the Iowa Broadcast News Association as well as multiple Emmy Awards.

Ron didn't let grass grow underneath his feet behind the anchor's desk. He leveraged his platform to become an invaluable civic leader across Cedar Valley, bringing particular focus to special needs kids. Ron's program called "Iowa's Child" series has helped 200 children find their forever families. Like my work in the U.S. Senate on foster care, what I hear from foster care kids as they are shuttled from one family to another over the course of a year: I would like to have a mom and dad and a home. That is what Ron was helping these 200 children find.

His leadership also was instrumental in raising enough money for the five Sullivan Brothers Iowa Veterans Museum in Waterloo. I don't expect people in Washington to know about the Sullivan brothers, but they are the five brothers who were on the same destroyer in 1942 in World War II. It sunk, and they all lost their lives. There are some trees planted out here, on the Capitol Complex, in their memory—five Japanese trees.

So, from one small town kid to another, I appreciate Ron's commitment

to our community and to the people of Iowa. He will certainly be missed behind the news desk. My wife Barbara and I wish the entire Steele family the very best in the years ahead.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

### BUDGET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, almost every single House Republican signed their names to what would be the largest Medicaid cuts in American history. The havoc, the damage that that would do to tens of millions of American families would be almost unprecedented when it comes to Medicaid.

Why did Republicans do it? So they could cut taxes for the billionaires club. The Republican agenda is quickly taking shape. Under Donald Trump's Republican Party, billionaires win; American families lose.

Last night proved that Senate Democrats are right. It doesn't matter if Republicans go with 1 bill or 2 bills or 50 bills. The endgame for Republicans has always been the same: cutting taxes for billionaires and forcing American families to pick up the tab.

Now the attention returns to the Republican Senate. Republican Senators know these billionaire tax breaks are unpopular, particularly because it will push deep, nasty cuts to Medicaid.

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



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When I hear the Republican leadership talk about the bills they propose, they never mention the tax cuts to billionaires, which is the crown jewel, in their minds, of what they are doing. But they are afraid to mention it because they know how unpopular it is with the American people.

They know it is going to increase the deficit by up to \$5 trillion. These deficit hawks over on the other side of the aisle and the House are willing to increase the deficit by that much.

So what are they doing about it, knowing how high it would increase the deficit, rising interest rates, rising costs, risk of economic downturn? What do they do? Instead of facing the problem head-on, they are resorting to budget gimmicks to hide the true cost of their billionaire tax cuts.

They want to use something—some of them—called a current policy baseline. In essence, current policy baseline is an attempt to magically turn \$5 trillion of deficit spending into zero dollars on their balance sheets. The deficit would still be there. It would still go up by \$5 trillion in actual terms, but this sleight of hand, this hocus-pocus, says it is not going to appear on a balance sheet because we are calling it current policy baseline.

Congress—Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative—has never used a “current policy” baseline for reconciliation and for good reason. Any junior high school math student could tell you their current policy baseline gimmickry is utter nonsense. It is an attempt for Senate Republicans to hide the true cost of their billionaire tax cuts from the American people.

At least House Republicans are being honest about the outrageous cost of their tax cuts in terms of the deficit. In fact, the House Freedom Caucus is being far more honest about the deficit than our Senate Republican colleagues. Maybe the Freedom Caucus should send the debt clocks that Representative THOMAS MASSIE wears on his lapel to the Senate Republicans.

What happened in the House last night and what happened last week in the Senate is only the beginning. Democrats are going to fight these billionaire tax cuts tooth and nail. Democrats are glad to have this debate because the American people will be aghast when they learn what is really in the Republican tax bill, and that is tax breaks—huge tax breaks—for their billionaire buddies who are all doing well, God bless them. The last thing America needs is another tax break for them—who are so rich already.

Americans are worried that with these tax breaks, inflation is going to get worse. Americans are worried that Donald Trump will start a trade war with our allies and make trips to the grocery store an utter nightmare.

We learned yesterday, for instance, that consumer confidence saw its biggest drop last month in 4 years—in 4 years. So this idea that the Republicans can hide what they are doing to

the American people is not working, and we Democrats are going to make sure that Americans know exactly what they are doing in terms of their tax breaks for billionaires hurting the average American.

The issues that Americans are actually worried about are costs, are inflation, are getting decent healthcare. But what are the Republicans spending their time on here in Congress? Cutting taxes for billionaires and then hiding the true cost on the deficit with a sleight of hand.

They are also slashing away at Medicaid and SNAP and so many other services that bring down the cost of living. This is absolutely not what the American people signed up for, and Republicans know it because they don't talk about it.

Talk about how close to \$2 trillion in your plan goes to the very wealthiest in America. You can't talk about it. Do you know why you can't talk about it? Because you know how unpopular it is.

Yes, it is true that the small number of very wealthy, greedy people who want their taxes even lower has a disproportionate hold on the Republican Party in the House and Senate. So they are doing it, but they are afraid to talk about it.

And for sure, when it comes to these tax cuts, when it comes to the cuts in Medicaid, and so many other bad things their budget does, Democrats will fight tooth and nail to prevent them.

#### DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, DOGE—day by day, Americans are getting more alarmed by the slash-and-burn approach DOGE is taking to basic government programs. Americans certainly want a more efficient government, but what DOGE and Donald Trump are doing is not efficiency. Instead, it is chaos. Americans did not sign up for chaos, that is for sure.

Americans did not sign up for DOGE to take its chain saw, for instance, to aviation safety. There was another near miss, this time in Chicago, in the air. Thank God no one was hurt, but this shows you the immense importance of having a fully staffed FAA.

How on Earth is it efficiency to fire aviation safety assistance or maintenance mechanics or people who help with safety inspections and repairs? But that is just what DOGE did. I can't imagine any American thinks that is efficiency.

The only thing that is going to accomplish, of course, is making flying less safe. It is going to lead to delays and mixups at airports.

And not even the 9/11 families who lost loved ones or were hurt as they rushed to the towers right after 9/11, not even these folks were safe from the DOGE buzz saw.

DOGE tried to ax the workforce for the World Trade Center Health Pro-

gram. I am glad we pushed Donald Trump and DOGE to reverse.

Later today, I will join Senator GILLIBRAND, Representatives GOLDMAN and GARBARINO to reintroduce the bipartisan 9/11 World Trade Center Health Program reintroduction, 2 months after Elon Musk killed this program when he tanked the bipartisan funding bill in December.

Mr. President, 9/11 families deserve to be treated with dignity, with respect, not with the contempt we see from DOGE. And no good business operator would take this slash-and-burn approach DOGE is taking.

People's Social Security benefits are also at risk. Their ability to see a doctor is at stake. Their ability to put kids in daycare is at stake. The longer DOGE is allowed to rain chaos on the American people, the stronger the backlash will become.

And let's not forget, even by their most optimistic projections—and they have had to reduce them—the amount of money that DOGE will cut is far less than the amount of the deficit created by the huge Republican tax cut. So all this talk that they need to do this for deficit reduction is belied by their clinging to a whopping deficit creation by the tax cut.

#### METHANE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the methane CRA, today, Senate Republicans will advance a measure undoing one of the most important tools we have to lower energy prices and hold Big Oil and Gas accountable.

The Republicans, once again, in obedience to the oil and gas industry, are pushing a resolution to reverse the methane emissions charge, which Democrats passed in the Inflation Reduction Act.

It makes big oil companies pay when they leak excessive and harmful levels of methane. Typically, the more methane a company leaks during drilling, the more these companies will have to charge for the methane they do deliver and the more gas prices will go up for families and businesses.

The oil companies, they don't believe in what our economists call externalities. They think they can just throw methane into the air and let everyone else pay the price in terms of climate change, in terms of bad health for people, et cetera.

What they want to do, our Republicans colleagues, will make gas prices go up for families and businesses.

Our law was a reasonable, common-sense, and a carefully tailored safeguard to prevent consumers from footing the bill of Big Oil's methane waste, paired with Federal funding to help big oil companies reduce their waste.

Reducing methane waste in the atmosphere saves consumers money. It protects local communities from pollution; and methane, as you know, is a superpotent greenhouse gas.

Scientists agree that reducing methane is one of the best things we can do