

CBO: No. The math simply doesn't add up. So that budget exists in fiscal fantasy land.

My Republican colleagues don't want to hear it, but more than a third of our national debt stems not from deficits but from economic shocks—the 2008 financial crisis and COVID. As we have heard over and over again in the Budget Committee, the economic shocks from climate change will likely dwarf those we experienced during the financial crisis—for instance, one caused by a climate-driven insurance crisis that crashes mortgage markets and property values nationwide. We have heard those warnings from everywhere from the chief economist of Freddie Mac to the front page of *The Economist* magazine.

What we should do, in bipartisan fashion, is decortrupt the Tax Code so that big corporations and billionaires are no longer a favored, free-riding elite. The Bush and Trump tax cuts skewed to the wealthy and big corporations are another third—\$10 trillion of the national debt. Without those tax cuts, the debt-to-GDP ratio, which is our best fiscal safety metric, would be declining in perpetuity.

Helping the wealthy avoid taxes is such an infatuation that House Republicans brought the United States to the brink of default in trying to prevent the IRS from cracking down on wealthy tax cheats.

If we want to address the national debt, preventing massive economic shocks, decortrupting the Tax Code and getting serious about healthcare reform are the ways to go about it. This is not.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, it has been proposed that there is no place to cut, that all of this spending is being used in such a noble fashion. I would propose that there are a couple of areas we might all agree on.

We spend about \$1 million studying Japanese quail to see if they are more sexually promiscuous on cocaine. Hmm. It seems like we could have just polled the audience on that one. It seems pretty clear. But we can't even cut things like that—\$1 million studying Japanese quail on cocaine to see if they are more sexually promiscuous.

We spend \$2 million studying whether, when you go to Luby's and you go to the cafeteria and someone sneezes in front of you on the food, you are more or less likely to take that food. Could we not cut that?

We spend about three-quarters of a million dollars studying selfies. If you take a selfie of yourself smiling and look at it later in the day, does it make you happy?

One of my favorites comes from 40 or 50 years ago, but the organization still exists and still keeps getting more money. This was from a conservative Democrat. This was a long time ago when they existed. William Proxmire

used to do the Golden Fleece Award. One of his favorites was, they wanted to determine which made you more aggressive—tequila or gin—so they got a group of fish, and they fed a group of fish gin, and then they fed the other group of fish tequila. I scratch my head and say: Well, gosh, everybody knows, right? It has to be tequila.

So, I mean, the thing is, is there any place to cut? Sure, there is. Most of these things come from the National Science Foundation. I have been harping on them for years. Do you know what they did last year? Every Democrat and half of my Republicans, who are our fellow travelers, doubled the amount of money they give to the National Science Foundation. So when they say, "Oh, well, that ludicrous thing? I would cut that," well, they are not going to cut it if you give them twice as much money.

So there are lots of ways. There is lots of fat. There are improper payments to the tune of billions and billions of dollars. They write a check to the wrong person. They write a check to dead people. I came to the floor and tried to get unanimous consent to quit sending checks to dead people. When we had the pandemic and they sent all the free checks, a lot of them went to dead people, for goodness' sake.

Do we ever cut any of the spending? Is there ever any remote slowdown in the spending? Every year, it goes up because they care about people, and they want to give you free stuff, but it is not free. There is going to be a \$2 trillion deficit, and you are going to pay for it through inflation.

There is no mystery to inflation. The Federal Reserve buys our debt. When they do and the new money enters the circulation, it dilutes the value of the currency. Instead, what do you hear from the other side? Oh, the grocery store owners are greedy. We must put price controls on.

Well, they should remember the story from the Soviet bloc countries. A man goes into the store, and he says: Are you the store that doesn't have any butter?

The guy behind the counter says: No. We are the store that doesn't have any toilet paper.

That was an old joke of the Soviet bloc countries. That is what you get with price controls. That is what you get when you misunderstand what causes inflation. That is what you get when you want to pattern yourself after the phenomenon of disaster which is Venezuela.

So what I am asking is, we should spend what comes in. It is what every American family does. It is what most States do. It is what most cities do and what most counties do—spend what comes in—even over half of the European Union. We think of them as socialist countries, and some border on it. But, guess what, they spend what comes in. Half of the European Union balances their annual budget.

They are destroying this country by giving you free stuff. The stuff they are

giving you is not free. There is no free lunch. You can't have free college. Somebody has to pay for it. There is no money up here. They are not giving you somebody else's money. They are not even taxing the rich. They are just borrowing it. It is all borrowed. They borrow to send it to Ukraine. They borrow to give it to you for free school. They will give you free cars. They will give you free houses. None of it is free. It is what causes inflation.

When you go to the grocery store, think of these people masquerading as Santa Claus. They are the ones who have caused the price of your steak to double, the price of milk to go up, the price of gas to go up. It is not the greedy grocery store owner; it is the shrinking dollar and the politicians masquerading as Santa Claus who are causing this economic havoc and ruin.

I recommend a "yes" vote on the only budget that will be presented this year because both parties have abdicated their roles. My budget balances it in 5 years. It is what we should do for the strength of America.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Kentucky.

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—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 502, S. Con. Res. 41.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 502, S. Con. Res. 41, a bill 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.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays are requested.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The result was announced—yeas 39, nays 56, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 252 Leg.]

YEAS—39

Barrasso	Fischer	Moran
Blackburn	Graham	Mullin
Boozman	Grassley	Paul
Braun	Hagerty	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeben	Risch
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Cassidy	Johnson	Rubio
Cornyn	Kennedy	Schmitt
Cramer	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Lummis	Thune
Daines	Marshall	Tillis
Ernst	McConnell	Tuberville

NAYS—56

Baldwin	Heinrich	Rounds
Bennet	Helmy	Sanders
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Schatz
Booker	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Kaine	Shaheen
Butler	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Capito	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cardin	Lujan	Tester
Carper	Markey	Van Hollen
Casey	Merkley	Warner
Collins	Murkowski	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warren
Duckworth	Murray	Welch
Durbin	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Padilla	Wicker
Gillibrand	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	Young
Hawley	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—5

Coons	Manchin	Vance
Cotton	Scott (FL)	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). On this vote, the yeas are 39, the nays are 56. The motion is not agreed to.

The motion was rejected.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session.

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 senior assistant 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. 787, Byron B. Conway, of Wisconsin, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Ben Ray Lujan, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jeanne Shaheen, Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard Blumenthal, Tammy Duckworth, Tammy Baldwin, Martin Heinrich, Alex Padilla.

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 Byron B. Conway, of Wisconsin, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Florida (Mr. SCOTT), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. VANCE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 58, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 253 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Helmy	Rosen
Booker	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Braun	Hirono	Schumer
Brown	Johnson	Shaheen
Butler	Kaine	Sinema
Cantwell	Kelly	Smith
Capito	King	Stabenow
Cardin	Klobuchar	Tester
Carper	Lujan	Tillis
Casey	Manchin	Van Hollen
Collins	Markey	Warner
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warnock
Cramer	Murkowski	Warren
Duckworth	Murphy	Welch
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Fetterman	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	
Graham	Peters	

NAYS—37

Barrasso	Hagerty	Ricketts
Blackburn	Hawley	Risch
Boozman	Hoeben	Rounds
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Budd	Kennedy	Schmitt
Cassidy	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Crapo	Lummis	Thune
Cruz	Marshall	Tuberville
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Young
Fischer	Mullin	
Grassley	Paul	

NOT VOTING—5

Coons	Schatz	Vance
Cotton	Scott (FL)	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELMY). On this vote, the yeas are 58, the nays are 37.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Delaware.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, the Office of Government Ethics is an Agency that independently works to oversee the executive branch's ethics program. The Director serves a term of 5 years in this instance, leading work that prevents financial conflicts of interest and ensures that the executive branch, regardless of political party, holds itself to the highest ethical standards.

Our Nation has been without a Senate-confirmed Director to this critical Agency for more than a year. I will say that again: more than a year. But, fortunately, we have a highly qualified nominee for this post, one who has received support from both Democrat and Republican Senators, including Senators on the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which I used to chair.

Since 2016, David Huitema has served as the Assistant Legal Adviser for Ethics and Financial Disclosure at the De-

partment of State. In this role, he has the responsibility of managing the Department's ethics program. Previously, he served as an attorney-adviser at the Department of State, worked in private practice for several years, and completed a clerkship at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

Mr. Huitema has a deep and thorough knowledge of the law and of ethics compliance in addition to his range of experience at the State Department and in private practice. I have no doubt that his skills and his experience will enable him to effectively lead the Office of Government Ethics.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 620, David Huitema, of Maryland, to be Director of the Office of Government Ethics for a term of five years; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, directing the Office of Government Ethics is an important position due to the Office's role in aiding the President with the nominations process and assistance to the Senate in evaluating potential conflicts of interest for Presidential nominations.

This point was, of course, made clear in Mr. Huitema's HSGAC hearing, as he testified to the committee that nominee vetting would be not just a priority but priority one for the Office of Government Ethics and would dominate the next year, meaning the year that is about to arrive.

Given the fact that this position serves, once confirmed, for a 5-year term, it is also important for us to remember that we are now just a few weeks away from a Presidential election, a Presidential election that will determine who will serve as President of the United States for the next 4 years. So in light of that, we should wait to see who is elected before confirming this person to a 5-year term.

It is concerning to me that during his hearing before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Mr. Huitema left open the possibility of supporting a partisan policy, a partisan approach, from a nonpartisan position, one that can be used as a means of further weaponizing our government against officials who might be appointed, should President Trump win, in a Republican administration. Individuals responsible with directing the Office of Government Ethics must not engage, promote, or tolerate partisan lawfare.

Particularly in the midst of unprecedented lawfare and political weaponization of the U.S. Government against Donald Trump by the Biden-Harris administration, I have got grave