

out of our atmosphere, which my friend Mr. WHITEHOUSE, who has done such a good job on this issue, tells me is 80 times as poisonous as CO<sub>2</sub>. Without this safeguard, Big Oil and Gas can waste as much natural gas as they like and then pass the cost on to consumers.

Why are Republicans doing this? Well, it is simple. They are putting the needs of Big Oil and Gas companies over the needs of the American people, over the health of the American people and the health of our environment, our climate, our globe. And the consequences for the American people, for their health and their energy bills, are going to be very harmful.

I urge my colleagues to think carefully, one last time, before voting to overturn it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all time has expired.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY RELATING TO "WASTE EMISSIONS CHARGE FOR PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SYSTEMS: PROCEDURES FOR FACILITATING COMPLIANCE, INCLUDING NETTING AND EXEMPTIONS"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the Congressional Review Act, the clerk will report H.J. Res. 35 by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 35) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems: Procedures for Facilitating Compliance, Including Netting and Exemptions".

VOTE ON H.J. RES. 35

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. TILLIS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Leg.]

YEAS—52

Banks	Blackburn	Britt
Barrasso	Boozman	Budd

Capito	Husted
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith
Collins	Johnson
Cornyn	Justice
Cotton	Kennedy
Crapo	Lankford
Cruz	Lee
Curtis	Lummis
Daines	Marshall
Ernst	McConnell
Fischer	McCormick
Graham	Moody
Grassley	Moran
Hagerty	Moreno
Hawley	Mullin
Hoeven	Murkowski

NAYS—47

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

NOT VOTING—1

Cramer

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 35) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Linda McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 770

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I speak with senior citizens all over Vermont and, in fact, in many parts of the country. Just last night, we held a telephone townhall in Vermont, and in our small State, 34,000 people were on the line. I think the reason for that is there is a great deal of anxiety among people in general and seniors in particular regarding the Republican budget proposal that was passed the other day in the House. Seniors and Americans all over this country have reason to be concerned.

At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, the Republican budget would give over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the top 1 percent—that is billionaires and the wealthiest people in our country. In Vermont and all over this country, seniors are asking: Well, how are they going to pay for that trillion-dollar gift to the 1 percent? The answer is not complicated. They have made it clear. Republicans will be making massive cuts in

healthcare, nutrition assistance, affordable housing, and education. These are precisely the programs that working families and kids and the elderly and the sick and the poor most depend upon. The Republican budget would cut Medicaid by \$880 billion. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has estimated that if these cuts are implemented, up to 36 million Americans, including millions of children, would have their health insurance taken away from them.

Let's be clear. When we have Republicans in the House passing a budget to make massive cuts to Medicaid, we are not just talking about throwing millions of kids off of the healthcare they need; we are also talking about massive cuts to community health centers, where some 32 million Americans receive the primary healthcare they need and where community health centers receive 43 percent of their funding from Medicaid. So a massive cut to Medicaid is a cut to the services that 32 million Americans receive, including many, many seniors.

At a time when we have a major crisis in nursing home availability in Vermont and all over this country, let us understand that Medicaid provides for two out of every three seniors who live in nursing homes. A massive cut to Medicaid is a massive cut to nursing homes and the people who utilize those homes. How many seniors would be thrown out of nursing homes if the Republicans cut Medicaid by \$880 billion? Nobody knows, but it would be a disaster for working families and their parents. That is for sure.

But it is not just Medicaid cuts that seniors are worried about. Today, nearly 22 percent of people over 65 years of age are trying to survive on an income of less than \$15,000 a year. That is an unbelievable and horrific reality. Imagine anyone in America, in any part of this country—let alone a senior citizen—trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less. I don't know how anybody can possibly do that, especially seniors who have healthcare needs and need prescription drugs and who need to heat their homes more than the general public. And it is not just seniors trying to get by on \$15,000; half of our Nation's seniors are trying to get by on less than \$30,000 a year.

The bottom line is that in the richest country in the history of the world, you have millions and millions of seniors today—people who helped build this country, people who raised us—who are barely getting by in the year 2025.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD, the United States now has the dubious distinction of not only having one of the highest rates of childhood poverty in the industrialized

world, we also have one of the highest rates of senior poverty—senior poverty—compared to other wealthy nations.

In America today, according to the latest OECD estimates, 23 percent of seniors are living in poverty compared to just 4.1 percent in Norway, 6.1 percent in France, 9.5 percent in Ireland, and 14.9 percent in the United Kingdom. That is a dubious distinction. That is something we should not be proud of. That is a crisis we should be addressing.

In addition to the poverty that millions of seniors in America are experiencing today, about half of older workers—these are people in the workforce right now, people between the ages of 55 and 64—have no retirement savings at all. You are 60 years old. You have worked your entire life. Half of the people in that situation—from 55 to 64—have no retirement savings at all.

As bad as all of that is, many of my Republican colleagues have proposed making a bad situation—a tragic situation—even worse by cutting Social Security. Some want to cut benefits. Others want to raise the retirement age. Then there are some who simply want to privatize Social Security and give it over to Wall Street.

Well, I strongly disagree. At a time when millions of seniors are struggling to keep their heads above water, I don't believe that now is the time—in fact, never is the time—to cut Social Security benefits. Instead of cutting Social Security and giving tax breaks to billionaires, Congress must expand Social Security so that every senior in America can retire with the dignity and the respect that he or she deserves. Further and importantly to the younger generation, we must also make Social Security solvent for generations to come.

So that is the goal. The goal is to say to seniors all over this country, in the richest country on Earth: We are going to address the fact that many of you can't quite figure out how to buy the food you need, heat your homes, get the prescription drugs you need. You are struggling. You helped build this country. You are our parents and our grandparents. We stand with you.

That is why I have introduced legislation today with 10 of my colleagues—Senators WARREN, MERKLEY, WELCH, PADILLA, SMITH, VAN HOLLEN, MARKEY, BOOKER, GILLIBRAND, and WHITEHOUSE—to accomplish both of those goals. This legislation would make Social Security solvent for the next 75 years. It would lift millions of seniors out of poverty, and it would expand benefits for seniors and people with disabilities by \$2,400 a year.

Now, I know that in the world here in Washington where the government is now run by billionaires, \$2,400 doesn't seem like a whole lot of money, but if you are trying to get by on \$15,000 a year and can't afford to heat your house and can't afford to buy a prescription drug that you need, \$2,400 is something that will help.

How do we do this? What does this legislation do? Well, at a time of massive income and wealth inequality, when billionaires pay an effective tax rate lower than the average worker, this legislation demands that the wealthiest people in America, the billionaires and others, start paying their fair share of taxes.

Today, absurdly and unfairly, a billionaire pays the same amount of money into Social Security as someone who makes \$176,000 a year. A billionaire pays the same amount into Social Security as somebody who makes \$176,000 a year. That is because there is a cap on the Social Security payroll tax.

What does that mean? It means, if you make up to \$176,000 a year, you pay 6.2 percent of your income in Social Security taxes, but if you make 10 times more—\$1.7 million a year—you pay just 0.62 percent of your income in Social Security taxes. If you make \$1 billion a year, you pay nothing more into the Social Security fund than someone making \$176,000.

Now, that may make sense to somebody—probably to the billionaire class—but it does not make sense to me. This legislation applies the Social Security payroll tax to all income—including capital gains and dividends—for those who make over \$250,000 a year. Under this bill, 91 percent of households in our country would not see their taxes go up by one single penny—not one penny for the bottom 91 percent.

Not only is this legislation good public policy, it also happens to be precisely what the American people want. According to a Data for Progress poll, 81 percent of the American people, including 79 percent of Independents and 75 percent of Republicans, support expanding Social Security benefits. So in passing this legislation, it is not only good policy, it is precisely what Democrats, Republicans, and Independents want.

Therefore, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 770, which was introduced earlier today; that the bill be considered read three times and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise today to discuss Senator SANDERS' request for unanimous consent for the Senate to pass his Social Security Expansion Act. Before I do so, I want to respond to a couple of points that were made.

The accusation was once again made that Republicans are trying to cut taxes for billionaires. The reality is, Republicans are trying to stop a tax increase on all Americans. The TCJA, or 2017 tax bill, is going to expire at the end of this year, and if it is not stopped from expiring, every American will get

a tax increase, and those in the lower income categories and middle-income categories will share \$2.6 trillion of that tax increase. That is what the tax fight is about.

Then, continuing what I call the politics of fear in the face of the reforms that we are bringing, the attack was, well, we are going to cut Medicaid, we are going to stop financing for community health centers, and we are going to do all of these terrible things. I have not seen such a bill in this Congress, in the House or the Senate. We are debating how to get rid of fraud, waste, and abuse. We are not looking at how to cut benefits in Medicaid. I believe that is very clear. Today was the first time on the floor that I heard we were looking at community health centers. I wasn't aware of that either.

The bottom line here is we are trying to pay attention to our \$37 trillion national debt by weeding out waste, fraud, and abuse. We will have disagreements about how to do that, but it is definitely not going to be all the things that are being brought up, that have been accused in order to stir people up and scare them and tell them that we should not pay attention to our national debt.

With regard to Social Security, we can all agree on the importance of Social Security, which provides monthly benefits to millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and their families.

I also agree with my colleagues on the other side that Congress must act to preserve and strengthen Social Security to ensure that it is there for current beneficiaries and future beneficiaries.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, if no action is taken, the combined Social Security trust funds will be exhausted within the next 10 years, meaning the program will not be able to pay the full amount of benefits currently promised.

However, I disagree with my colleagues' approach here today, and they have disagreed with our approaches. We have competing ideas about how we should address this issue.

Addressing Social Security's solvency will require thoughtful discussion about a variety of policy options that culminates in a bipartisan solution, not a cramdown of a different solution that we haven't even had the opportunity to have a discussion in the Finance Committee about.

Instead, my Democrat colleagues are pursuing a live UC of a bill that has not received consideration before the full committee and has never had a Republican cosponsor in the House or the Senate.

This bill would also raise taxes on certain workers making less than \$400,000—something my Democratic colleagues have previously promised not to do.

For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Michigan.

NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to Linda McMahon's nomination to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Education.

All across America, from small towns like Grand Marais to cities like Grand Rapids, public schools serve as the bedrock of our communities.

As a product of Michigan public schools, the son of a public school teacher, and having watched my own three children attend public schools, I know firsthand the importance of public education.

Education is the cornerstone of academic achievement, career development, and lifelong learning in our society. A strong public education system is critical to not only our Nation's economy but community safety, social mobility, and the health of our democracy.

We need a Secretary of Education who values and respects public education and the millions of teachers and faculty who support the system.

We need a Secretary of Education who will support critical funding streams like Head Start for early education, IDEA for students with disabilities, and the school meal program that ensures that no student—no student—goes to class hungry.

That is why we cannot allow Mrs. McMahon to run our Department of Education. Instead of working to protect funding for the programs that support our students, improve classrooms, and help recruit the hard-working teachers that we so desperately need today, Mrs. McMahon has made it clear that she has, well, other priorities.

During her committee hearing, she blatantly supported efforts to dismantle our education system, including taking funding away from our public schools and using it to make investments in private schools. Mrs. McMahon and others have tried to sell this as "school choice," but we know—we know—that it is basically a voucher program that will ultimately give private schools the ability to hand pick students and close their doors to everyone else. Private schools have no requirement to serve students with disabilities, students with mental health needs, or homeless students.

We have already seen private school voucher programs fail in States that have actually implemented them, like Louisiana—Louisiana, where students who accepted vouchers experienced significant declines in their academic performance, worse than the learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Katrina.

So-called school choice does not meet the needs of our students, and American voters overwhelmingly agree. A 2024 poll found that less than a quarter of Americans support increasing funding for school vouchers. Meanwhile, 68 percent of Americans want to boost public school funding to better support

teachers and give our opportunities and children the education and career opportunities that they certainly deserve.

Under Mrs. McMahon's plan, we would be letting private schools decide who is educated and who is not. But, unfortunately, we know that these private institutions will always prioritize their bottom line, and the needs of students and families will be second.

If confirmed as Secretary of Education, the quality of our American education will certainly decline, and our children will ultimately suffer the consequences.

I would urge my colleagues to vote no on Mrs. McMahon's nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, over the last few months, there has literally been more than 10,000 Californians who have made it a point to reach out to me by phone calls, by letters, by emails to say one thing loud and clear: Stand up for public education.

There are students throughout California, teachers throughout California, parents throughout California, and I am sure beyond in all of our States who are afraid that Donald Trump is going to decimate Federal funding for public schools. And from what we have seen, they have every right to be concerned.

You see, only 1 month into office, the richest President in our history has teamed up with the richest man in the world to slash public funding across the board, including in education.

They have already terminated nearly \$1 billion in contracts with the Education Department alone. They have fired or placed on leave Education Department staff. These are hard-working Americans dedicated to everything from protecting the civil rights of students to special education, to student aid. And they are making it clear that this is just the beginning.

President Trump has bragged that he actually wants to eliminate the Department of Education, threatening the quality of education of 80 percent of students who go to public schools.

Colleagues, that is the situation. That is the context in which we find ourselves today as we consider the nomination of Linda McMahon to serve as Education Secretary.

We could talk about Linda McMahon's qualifications, or, frankly, lack thereof, but I am not shocked because President Trump isn't looking for someone with the background or the commitment to strengthen education in America. He is looking for someone to destroy it. President Trump has said publicly that he wishes that Mrs. McMahon would "put herself out of a job." And it is clear that she is ready to do it. And to justify it, I know I have heard of her countless accusations of Department of Education overreach or that the Department is just too big. Now, if we are saying this because of the budget cuts Republicans

are starving for to underwrite the tax rate for the wealthy, let me remind us all that the Department of Education is the smallest Agency in the Cabinet by a lot.

The Department is responsible, though, for promoting equal access to education; ensuring protections and support for students with special needs; defending the civil rights of tens of millions of students; and, yes, managing the student loans and Pell grants that students need to afford an education, just like I did when I was graduating from San Fernando High School, trying to figure out how I was going to be able to pay for college.

Yet Linda McMahon and Republicans in Congress will try to sell us on the idea that education should be left to States and to local communities.

Tell that to the young student who is struggling to read by the fourth grade but whose school doesn't have the resources they need to help them catch up. Tell that to the parents of an eighth grader who is behind in math who fear that their child will never be able to make up the time that they lost during the pandemic.

While it is true that State and local communities play the primary role in education, it is actually the Federal Government that helps close the gaps. That is part of what makes our country strong—the idea that no matter where you live, no matter who your parents are, or what tax bracket your family is in, you have the right to a good education because, after all, it is the surest path to achieve your American dream.

And, yes, it is personal for me. As I mentioned, I am a proud product of public education, a graduate of San Fernando High School—go Tigers. Upon completion of my high school education, I was accepted and had the blessed opportunity to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where I earned my degree in mechanical engineering. That led to a better life and more opportunities—exactly what my parents worked so hard and sacrificed for. That is the American dream. And I know that, by far, I am not alone.

That is why I find it outrageous that Mrs. McMahon and Republicans can so callously plan to take a chain saw to the American dreams of so many current and future students.

But, today, we are here to say that tens of millions of public school students are not line items on your chopping block. They deserve better. Our country is better than this.

I urge all of my colleagues to reject President Trump's attempts to abolish the Department of Education and to reject Linda McMahon's nomination or any nominee who is willing to carry out his wishes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today deeply concerned about the state of public education in our country.