

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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. 129, Edward Walsh, of New Jersey, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ireland.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, John Barasso, Tim Sheehy, Bernie Moreno, Steve Daines, Eric Schmitt, Roger Marshall, Tommy Tuberville, John Hoeven, Marsha Blackburn, Bill Cassidy, John R. Curtis, Jim Justice, James E. Risch, Thom Tillis, Markwayne Mullin.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 144.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of James O'Neill, of California, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 Calendar No. 144, James O'Neill, of California, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services.

John Thune, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, Todd Young, Ron Johnson, Marsha Blackburn, Katie Boyd Britt, Cynthia M. Lummis, James Lankford, Markwayne Mullin, John Barasso, Tommy Tuberville, Ted Budd, Chuck Grassley, Bill Cassidy, David McCormick.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Duffey nomination.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

(The remarks of Ms. KLOBUCHAR pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 259 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Senator from Texas.

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, before we left last week for the recess, of course, the House did what it was supposed to do by passing President Trump's Big Beautiful Bill. This, of course, is the way we are going to prevent a multitrillion-dollar tax increase on the American people, something they can least afford on top of 4 years of Bidenomics that resulted in a 20-percent increase in the cost of everything because of runaway inflation.

But this is the vehicle that we will use not only to extend the President's tax provisions but to prevent the largest tax increase in American history and to do some other very important things that I am going to talk about momentarily.

Those who follow Senate procedure, which have to be a very small number of people in the United States, know that our job now is to work with the Parliamentarian on what is known as the Byrd bath because the rules that apply in the House are different than those that apply here in the Senate. So the parties will be making their arguments to the Parliamentarian on what survives the so-called Byrd bath, named after Robert C. Byrd, the famous West Virginia Senator and parliamentary expert. But that is a unique rule here in the Senate. So that is really the next step for people who are watching at home, wondering what in the world is happening up here in Washington, DC.

Reconciliation, which is the process we are going through, of course, is a unique vehicle—maybe not unique. It is a special vehicle, though, because it doesn't require 60 votes in the Senate to get legislation passed. But the Byrd rule is in place to make sure that we don't use this special vehicle to do things that otherwise would require 60 votes and broader bipartisan support. So that is why it exists, and that is why we will be going through that process.

But the budget resolution, of course, has instructed both the House and the Senate committees to spend money in some instances—for example, the Judiciary Committee in the House, Homeland Security, and the Armed Services Committee—to actually spend money to bolster our defense and border security—something that, if we did not do, we would be in a world of hurt, even though, frankly, with President Trump now in office, the border crossings have dropped precipitously, about 95 percent.

But still, both ICE, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and the Department of Homeland Security need additional resources for detention facilities

and personnel, or else they will run out of money.

But one of the most important things that we need to do in this budget reconciliation process is to finally—finally—come to grips with our national debt. We are approaching \$37 trillion in debt, which is more money than any human being can actually imagine. But here is something that I have always recalled that sort of brings it home to me: We are now spending more money on interest on the national debt than we are to defend our Nation, which is the No. 1 job of the Federal Government.

Of course, as I have said many times from the floor and as any Senator knows, the world is the most dangerous it has been at any time since World War II. You look at what is happening in North Korea, with North Korea providing troops to the Russians to defeat the Ukrainians. You see, obviously, Iran enriching uranium and providing drones to Russia for the battle in Ukraine. You see President Xi in the Indo-Pacific, threatening to take Taiwan by 2027. And then you see what is happening in the Middle East, with Hamas and Israel and the Iranian proxies, whether it is the Houthis in Yemen or Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Gaza.

The world is a very, very dangerous place, and the fact of the matter is, we are on an unsustainable course. We cannot protect the Nation, and we cannot establish deterrents so that our young men and women never have to fight in wars without making the appropriate investments in our national security. And we simply cannot do that on the current trajectory we are on and with the debt now approaching \$37 trillion. The fact of the matter is, we really haven't tried very hard in the past.

And as the Presiding Officer knows, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, the Appropriations Committee, which handles the amount of money that we spend on an annual basis, only deals with about 28 percent of what the Federal Government spends. The rest of that money—the 72 percent—comes from mandatory spending programs and things like the Tax Code because the Tax Code has actually become a means whereby we actually spend money, as well through tax credits and the like.

The Federal Government spends roughly \$6.7 trillion a year, and we are never going to balance the budget just looking at 28 percent of Federal spending, which is what we do through discretionary spending. And, now, that means this is our opportunity—maybe, a once-in-a-generation opportunity—to begin to chip away at that national debt.

If anything should get our attention, the recent credit ratings from Moody's underscores the importance of including these reforms in this particular legislation. Moody's recently downgraded its rating of U.S. credit from Aaa to Aa1, and they pointed to our national

debt, especially our growing entitlement spending, as a reason to lower our credit rating.

Now, this is the United States of America, and we are seeing our credit rating downgraded because Congress has not had the courage to deal with this impending potential debt crisis. If we want the United States to maintain its standing in the world, if we want to be able to have the resources to defend the Nation and deter our adversaries, we have to at least begin to get our fiscal house in order. And this bill—the Big Beautiful Bill from the House—we are going to make it even more beautiful here in the Senate, but it is going take 51 Senators having the courage to step up and do some hard things, like deal with this debt trajectory. But the good news is that this is our opportunity right now.

One avenue to achieving some of these savings that I want to talk about today is implementing work requirements for able-bodied adults in our means-tested programs. There are a number of them, including Medicaid, food stamps—now known as SNAP—and nutrition programs in the farm bill that have means testing. In other words, only if you are within a certain level, otherwise known as poverty levels, you will get the benefit of these taxpayer-supported programs. But if you make more than that, then you will not qualify.

Unfortunately, now we have lapsed into the situation where many able-bodied adults are simply living off the taxpayers and not providing either for their families or their communities but, rather, are a drain on the Tax Code and are helping to drive this national debt.

Now, this is something that I have been advocating for a number of years, but I have to confess it is nothing new. Now, our Democratic colleagues are accusing Republicans of slashing these programs, which, of course, is not true because we haven't actually finished our work yet.

But, first of all, implementing work requirements for means-tested programs, as I said, is nothing new. Back during the era of President Clinton's Presidency, Democrats agreed with Republicans that able-bodied adults who received government benefits should be required to work or, in this case, they need to be looking for work or they need to provide some community service. They can't just sit on the couch at home and play video games.

They shared—Democrats did, back then—our goal of incentivizing individual responsibility, rather than encouraging people to fall into the trap of long-term government dependency. Inspired by this goal, President Clinton and then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich came together to lead the effort to pass what is now known as the Welfare Reform Act of 1996.

This legislation implemented work requirements to TANF, otherwise known as Temporary Assistance to

Needy Families, and had remarkable success in declining welfare caseloads, while increasing employment and earnings among low-income individuals.

So why would we not resurrect this tried-and-true playbook from the bipartisan era of 1996?

The U.S. Federal Government spends about a trillion dollars a year on means-tested programs, and work requirements are one commonsense step toward reforming this trajectory—again, which is adding to our national debt.

Recent research from the Foundation for Government Accountability found that more than 62 percent of able-bodied adults who received Medicaid benefits do not work at all—62 percent, two out of three. As a Nation, labor force participation—the number of people actually looking for work and participating in work—has been on the decline among working-age men, especially, for decades.

Between 1960 and 2023, the fraction of working-age men who were out of the labor force increased from about 3 percent to 11 percent—3 percent to 11 percent. By 2024, that had increased to 22 percent. That is a nearly 700-percent increase over the last six and a half decades.

A society with that large a number of prime-age workers sitting at home, receiving government benefits, is not the sign of a healthy and flourishing society. And the truth is, we simply can't afford it, even if we wanted to, which, I daresay, we do not.

With our national debt now in excess of \$36 trillion, there is no better time to encourage these large numbers of disengaged adults to jump back into the labor force. So I was happy to see that the House bill included work requirements that go into effect in 2026, and I hope the Senate will include this policy in our bill as well.

Suffice it to say that our standing in the world, our ability to lead the world, and our ability, as I mentioned at the outset, to defend our Nation, depends on our ability to get our fiscal house in order.

We have kicked the can down the road so long that we simply have run out of road. While the reality of the situation means we will not, in one fell swoop, actually balance the budget, this Big Beautiful Bill is an opportunity, at the very least, to bend the curve of our debt trajectory to begin that process.

At the end of the day, while we all have priorities we would like to see in this bill, Republicans have to be united because we need 51 votes in a 53-vote Senate to get this bill done, and we all share, on this side of the aisle, the same goal of implementing President Trump's agenda. And he is certainly going to be encouraging us to get this done. So failure is not an option.

If the President's tax cuts are not extended, the American people will face the largest tax increase in American history. And 62 percent of Americans

will see a tax increase in 2026, and working parents will see the child tax credit cut in half.

That means the average family of four in Texas or Alabama or anywhere else in the country that earns \$80,000 will face a \$1,700 tax increase.

As I said at the outset, this would be on top of about a 20-percent increase in just about everything as a result of the inflationary policies of the Biden-Harris administration. So our constituents, the American taxpayer, working families, simply cannot afford that sort of tax increase on top of this 40-year-high inflation.

Back home in Texas, my constituents have seen their taxes increase on average \$3,000 next year. As I have traveled my State as I did during the course of this most recent recess, my constituents have emphasized to me time and time again how much they are depending on these tax cuts being renewed, especially our small businesses that depended on the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to hire more staff, to purchase equipment that they could then expense, and to provide additional benefits to their employees.

And so all of these small businesses, which are the primary job-creating engine in America would be hurt and would suffer increased costs and have to cut somewhere in their business. So let's not let the naysayers distract us from our goal.

The American people are depending on us to pass the President's agenda through this One Big Beautiful Bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL DUFFEY

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to carefully consider their vote for the nomination of Mr. Michael Duffey to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

This position is unique in the Department of Defense. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment has a wide range of duties, including delivering on a timely basis cost-effective capabilities for the Armed Forces; supervising all elements of the defense acquisition enterprise and the defense industrial base; overseeing the modernization of our nuclear forces; and serving as a principal adviser to the Secretary on acquisition, sustainment, and core logistics. It requires a leader of the highest quality of judgment, expertise, and character.

There is no question that President Trump has a right to choose who he wants in critical roles, but the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment should be someone