

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

who is capable, without question, to meet the demands of the job and the expectations of those he will lead. They should have the experience and temperament to manage one of the most complex offices in the Department of Defense.

Unfortunately, my view is that Mr. Duffey lacks experience leading any organization remotely as large and complex as the Department of Defense acquisition enterprise.

For better or worse, the industry and the workforce that supports the Pentagon is enormous, complicated, and is a huge factor in our Nation's economy. Mismanaging it could harm taxpayers' investments, the American economy, and workers' lives. Do we want to risk hundreds of billions of dollars in acquisition programs to such a nominee?

I have serious doubts about Mr. Duffey's ability to run this critical function of our government.

Furthermore, in 2019, Mr. Duffey played a key role in the scandal that led to President Trump's first impeachment: withholding military aid from Ukraine to extort information on Mr. Trump's political opponents. While serving as a top official in the Office of Management and Budget, Mr. Duffey directed the Pentagon to withhold \$250 million from the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative while Mr. Trump simultaneously demanded that President Zelenskyy hand over any information he had about Mr. Biden's family. Mr. Duffey's role in this outrageous event was brought to light during the impeachment proceedings. In my view, abusing the privilege of public office to exact political revenge is disqualifying.

If confirmed, there are legitimate questions about Mr. Duffey's willingness to disregard the statutory directions of Congress.

And, finally, Mr. Duffey coauthored a chapter for the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 that suggested Federal procurement policy should be used to attack so-called woke policies in corporate America. It is not hard to imagine how Mr. Duffey could use his position as the head of the largest acquisition organization in the world to weaponize Federal funding against private corporations that he and President Trump disagree with politically.

We have seen this played out in the context of universities. We have seen this played out in the context of going after funding that NIH provides to many universities, but, particularly, this all-out assault on people that the President perceives as being unfit or unsupportive of him, that directly translates to Mr. Duffey to not just esteemed universities throughout the country but our national defense—corporations that, in fact, have embraced the idea of bringing us all together, getting the best possible person, moving them up. That would be an incredible disaster and failure for the Nation.

And Mr. Duffey failed to alleviate any of these concerns during his Senate Armed Services Committee testimony.

As I hope my colleagues know, my top priority has always been national security, and partisanship has no place in that mission. And I will always pick up the phone for whomever holds leadership positions in the Department of Defense, and I will seek opportunities to work with them to strengthen and support our military.

Whomever they may be, I hope that they comport themselves with the wisdom, composure, and character—underlining “character”—that this awesome responsibility demands. Our men and women in uniform and, indeed, the American people deserve nothing less.

And the question I have is this: Is Mr. Duffey the best we have to offer?

I do not believe so, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this nominee.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina). 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 assistant 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. 73, Michael Duffey, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, John Barrasso, Tim Sheehy, Bernie Moreno, Steve Daines, Eric Schmitt, Roger Marshall, Tommy Tuberville, John Hoeven, Marsha Blackburn, Bill Cassidy, John R. Curtis, Jim Justice, Thom Tillis, Katie Boyd Britt, Markwayne Mullin.

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 Michael Duffey, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. OSSOFF) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 282 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—45

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

NOT VOTING—4

Booker	Ossoff
Graham	Sullivan

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 45.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Duffey, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the President of the Senate, pursuant to Public Law 85-874, as amended, appoints the following individual to the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: the Honorable MARK WARNER of Virginia (reappointment).

The Chair announces, on behalf of the Democratic Leader, pursuant to Public Law 70-770, the appointment of the following individual to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission: the Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH of New Mexico (reappointment).

The Chair, on behalf of the Democratic Leader, pursuant to the Public Law 118-144, announces the appointment of the following individuals to be members of the Commission to Study the Potential Transfer of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History to the Smithsonian Institution Act: Louise Mirrer of New York and Amy Gutmann of Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.