

was pretty simple. She said: You know, I am really tired of watching women and especially women of color being ignored. She said: "So I'm not sorry."

Mr. President, I have to tell you that "sorry, not sorry" became a little bit of a rallying cry around the Minnesota State Capitol after that and is something we all remember Melissa for.

She lived her values, and she knew how to stand up for others and insisted that we all treat one another with dignity and respect as we undertake the serious work of public service, even in a political climate that too often rewards meanness and sort of a dehumanizing of one another.

Here is the third thing I want everyone to know about Melissa Hortman: She was a formidable legislator.

Melissa's tenure of public service began long before her election to the Minnesota Legislature. She was an intern in this very body for then-Senators Al Gore and John Kerry. After law school, she served as a clerk in our State's court system and then as an assistant Hennepin County attorney.

She first rose to prominence after winning a housing discrimination case as a legal aid attorney. What she won for her client was at the time the largest civil award in Minnesota history for housing discrimination—and she was 27 years old.

She volunteered on campaigns and ran for office twice, losing before she won and came to the Minnesota Legislature. She was tenacious.

Once elected, her talent was immediately obvious to her caucus. By her second term, she was already mounting and growing in leadership. By the time she was elected speaker, she had a remarkable record as a negotiator, an honest broker, someone who was true to her principles even when she had to make tough choices.

Melissa's leadership during the 2023 legislative session of the Minnesota Legislature was nothing short of historic. Much has been written about the great accomplishments of this legislative session in Minnesota, but I think an underappreciated part of this was that this remarkable session didn't just happen in one short period; it happened because of years and years and years of work by legislators and organizers and activists building support of consensus, and Melissa was a part of that work from the very beginning.

The success of that legislature and that legislative session came because of her ability to see an opportunity and to meet the moment and meet it with deftness and courage, and the result has been transformational to Minnesota.

She always believed that you can make a difference for people if you work at it, and she did. Because of her leadership, more than 13½ million more Minnesota students get a healthy and free breakfast and lunch in 2024. Minnesota is on track to eliminate all lead water service lines by 2033 thanks to Melissa. More than 65,000 Minneso-

tans were automatically registered to vote. Minnesota, of course, is the State—we are very proud of this—with the second highest voter turnout in the 2024 Presidential election and the highest youth voter turnout by far.

Starting next year, working Minnesotans who are starting or growing or caring for their families will have access to paid leave thanks to Melissa.

In short, millions—millions—of Minnesotans are better off because of the work that she did. Her record of accomplishment is so extensive, it is hard to capture it all in just a few short minutes. It is so bitter to realize that she was only 55. She had so many more contributions to make, so much—as Melissa would say: Don't get carried away. I was just going to do my work. I was going to work as hard as I could.

It is bitter for us that her life was taken in this way, and it will now be up to all of us to carry on these fights. I will miss her leadership and her friendship as our State navigates these uncertain times.

Mr. President, I look around this Senate Chamber, and I see legislators who, like Melissa, understand that the job of a legislature and a legislator is to help fix things, not just talk about fixing things, to lift up people who need help, to build opportunity, and to use the power of our connections to one another to build a better, stronger, more fair community.

I hope my colleagues will take heart and inspiration from Melissa's example and rededicate ourselves to what it means to be a legislator, working across lines of difference to solve problems for the people who sent us here.

I want to close with a suggestion from Melissa and Mark's beloved children Sophie and Colin to all of us in Minnesota just yesterday. It is in the spirit of Melissa's directness and down-to-earthness.

She said:

If you would like to honor the memory of Mark and Melissa, please consider the following: Plant a tree. Visit a local park and make use of the amenities, especially a bike trail. Pet a dog. A golden retriever is ideal, but any will do. Tell your loved ones a cheesy dad joke and laugh about it. Bake something—bread for Mark or a cake for Melissa—and share it with someone. Try a new hobby and enjoy learning something. Stand up for what you believe in, especially if that thing is justice and peace.

May the memory of Melissa and Mark be a blessing to all who knew and loved them. May John and Yvette have a speedy recovery. And may we all find a way to recover and be better after these terrible attacks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, first of all, I just want to say how powerful the presentations were talking about the tragedy in Minnesota and how all of our hearts go out to the families and to

the entire State because it is obviously something that had a profound impact upon the entire community, and it is something that has all of us grieving for them. I was just touched, as I think everyone who heard them was, with the presentations that we heard.

Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to the Republican's "Big Billionaire Boondoggle," which is economic sabotage and climate denial masquerading as fiscal policy.

Last night's Senate Finance Committee text doesn't just double down on repealing smart clean energy tax credits, it erodes our progress and our chance at a livable future.

Senate Republicans are doubling down on egregious attacks against historic investments in the Inflation Reduction Act, cutting more than \$500 billion in investments and programs, threatening hundreds of thousands of jobs, and raising monthly household energy bills.

In 2024—this is the big number—in 2024, 94 percent of all new electricity generation added to our country was wind and solar and batteries. I want to repeat that. In 2024, 94 percent of all of the new electricity generation capacity added in our country was wind and solar and batteries. That is 50,000 megawatts of solar, 4,000 megawatts of wind, and 11,000 megawatts of batteries. Compare that with the fuels of the past. Last year, only 2,500 megawatts of natural gas were added and zero from coal.

That is the present state of affairs for electricity generation installation in our country in 2025 as we begin this debate in the Senate over the reconciliation bill—over the tax policy for our country.

Unfortunately, it is why the oil and gas and coal industry, through the Republicans, are using the budget bill to rig the game while eliminating incentives that lower energy costs and reduce collusion, but they are not going to remove the tax breaks for the fossil fuel industry.

So what is about to unfold is that we are going to see the pursuance of a vendetta against wind and solar energy by cutting incentives for the cleanest and cheapest sources of electricity, all to pad the pockets of the big oil and big gas industries.

This bill eliminates the residential clean and efficient energy incentives. Let me say that again. If you want to put solar panels on your roof, that tax break is going to be gone. If you want to make your home more energy efficient, that tax break is going to be gone. Heat pumps, all of it, is gone. Robbing homeowners—homeowners—of the ability to save money on energy bills, breathe safer air indoors at home, and ensure a livable future for their families. And it also removes support for families looking to buy a clean vehicle, an electric vehicle, and saving money at the pump.

It imposes draconian restrictions on large-scale solar and wind incentives.

That is the solar and wind installations that the utilities may want to install in our country. So it is a multipronged attack upon what is—in 2024, and it is already unfolding again in 2025—the future. It is wind and solar and batteries.

And it is unfolding in a way which, again, threatens the incumbent energy sources. And in place of these programs, there are no solutions. There is just more pollution that is going to be what happens as a result of what the Republicans are trying to do with this bill.

And you wind up with higher prices. You wind up with fewer jobs. If this bill passes, solar deployment is expected to drop nearly 40 percent by 2030 than what was expected before.

And as energy demand increases driven by power-hungry AI data centers and natural gas LNG exports, Republicans are choosing to strangle America's supply of cheap solar and wind, which we are going to need for the AI revolution. The estimates are that AI itself over the next 10 years could double the need for electricity in our country.

And what this bill will do is take wind and solar and batteries off the field and then say to the natural gas industry and oil industry: You figure out how to get it done.

But that is not what, obviously, people in our country want. They are making decisions that have resulted in 2024 with 94 percent of all new electricity being wind and solar and batteries. So it is heading in just the opposite direction of where the American people are headed.

So this is just economics 101: High demand plus low supply means higher energy prices for everyone. That is what they are setting up if we take wind and solar out of the mix, forcing families, on average, to pay \$150 more per month on their energy bills just in 5 years, and \$260 per month more each month in 10 years because there won't be the competition, and there won't be the supply.

And the less the supply is the higher the price for the remaining electricity in our society. And it will also destroy 840,000 American jobs by the year 2030, jobs that would have been people up on roofs installing the solar or having offshore wind work or electricians off the Atlantic Coast or installing coal efficiency into homes across our country and just going through the home to make it more energy efficient, solar installation, and fewer manufacturing jobs for solar and wind all across our country.

Republicans want to frame their cuts as eliminating wasteful Democratic spending, but the communities and constituents they were elected to represent, they are going to stand to lose a great deal. The States with the highest spikes in energy prices are going to be South Carolina, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Louisiana under this bill. We are taking out the alternatives that could have helped them moderate the prices in those States.

And the States with the largest job losses: Texas, Florida, Indiana, and Georgia. So this isn't a red State or a blue State issue; this is creating a national economic crisis. Eighty percent of the IRA funding has gone to red States—80 percent, only 20 percent to blue States. And by the way, that is how the bill was designed.

The extra tax breaks went to the States that would be energy transition States, and there has been an explosion by the hundreds of thousands of new jobs. And the Republican bill would make the United States the laggard, not the leader in innovation.

Already China is investing four times more than the United States in renewable energy. Here is China's plan. They plan on investing \$1 trillion a year for the next 10 years every year—\$10 trillion—and the same thing is true for Japan. They have already made an announcement that they are going to invest a trillion dollars over the next 10 years.

So we might as well just be gift wrapping the clean energy industry, gift wrapping it for China and other countries to be the global leader.

So that is where we are. Instead of catching up and overtaking China, this bill will cede more jobs and more progress, and Republicans are putting our health and our planet up for sale. This bill would increase emissions equivalent to putting 72 million more cars on the road and eliminates pollution-reduction programs, leading to approximately 930 additional premature deaths every single year.

So that is the plan when it comes to clean energy, and it is going to be an absolute disaster for us. And, additionally, as affirmed last night, Republicans want to slash over \$1 trillion from our healthcare system, and the House already passed cuts that would rip \$800 billion from Medicaid and \$500 billion from Medicare.

The Senate Republicans released text last night that doesn't just support these cuts but makes them actually worse, and their changes would make it harder for people to stay on their insurance. It would create more paperwork for patients to fill out. It would make it more difficult for States to fund their healthcare programs, and it would leave less people with access to healthcare across our Nation. It would take 16 or 17 million people and take away their insurance in our country.

So this isn't just line items or a spreadsheet; this is people's lives. If we cut people off their health insurance and less money goes to hospitals, nursing homes, health clinics, people will not be able to get healthcare. People will lose their local hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics. Health workers will lose their jobs, and rural communities could lose their biggest employers.

People will be forced to make impossible decisions about whether their healthcare is worth going into bankruptcy or medical debt. And if Republicans pass this bill, instead of address-

ing our country's healthcare crisis, we will be supercharging it.

But they don't need to listen to me. Here is what the experts have found. A study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that Republican cuts would increase the number of people skipping medical care because of cost from nearly 129,000 people to nearly 839,000 people a year.

A study from Yale and Penn found that Federal cuts from Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act would lead to 51,000 deaths per year. And just last week, I released data produced by the Sheps Center at the University of North Carolina about how substantial cuts to Medicare and Medicaid could force 338 hospitals across the country into financial distress, leading them to cut services or close the hospital altogether.

Where are those hospitals? Well, in Kentucky, there are 35 of them that could be at risk for their viability. Louisiana is 33 hospitals. These are rural hospitals. They rely upon Medicaid. They rely upon the Affordable Care Act to pay the bills.

So this is something that is going to be very, very dangerous, hundreds of rural hospitals put on the brink because of the decisions made by Republicans in this Congress and in this White House. This is a lethal risk to take on to pay the tax breaks for billionaires.

If this bill passes and even one patient loses their insurance because of burdensome paperwork in a single hospital or nursing home, the responsibility will fall on anyone who voted yes on this bill.

And our State and local public health officials know this risk, which is why they are asking to stop these cuts. The Louisiana State house, with a Republican majority, passed a resolution just this week asking Congress to "oppose sweeping or indiscriminate cuts to Medicaid and to instead work in partnership with states to strengthen and preserve the program for the future." That is the Louisiana State house Republicans.

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners in Michigan voted to oppose Medicaid cuts. Mr. President, 52 organizations in Alabama, including the Alabama Cancer Society, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, churches all across the State, wrote to the Governor urging opposition to healthcare cuts, citing the need for more care and less bureaucracy.

And on June 12, 900 State and local elected officials from across the country—including mayors and State senators and representatives, attorneys general—all stood up to come out against "the damaging and reckless plan."

And these proposed cuts are as dangerous as they are pointless.

So I am going to conclude on this: Donald Trump and Republicans only need to rush these cuts through to guarantee tax breaks for billionaires.

So the people who will benefit the most are the upper 0.1 percent. And as millions more Americans lose their healthcare, billionaires who can afford concierge medicine will get a handout from the government.

The rich will get richer, while the sick who are the poorest are going to be left without their healthcare. The other ones are going to lose their insurance.

This is what this billionaire boondoggle is all about. It takes financial security from children, rips dinner off the family table, and crushes people's opportunities for health and financial security and sells it away to the ultrawealthy.

This is not a big beautiful bill, as Donald Trump would call it, it is a big billionaire buyoff and a bludgeoning of our health, our economy, our future.

We don't have to do this. Making these cuts is optional, and I am asking my Republican colleagues to please vote no. We can do a lot better with this legislation. Please—please—let us negotiate a sensible resolution of this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Massachusetts for laying out how families lose and billionaires win on this not so beautiful bill that Trump has put forward.

It is really a big beautiful betrayal, betrayal because Trump campaigned for helping families. But as we have seen with the details in the end, this is about helping billionaires. The bottom 20 percent, the less affluent, they get tax benefits of about \$90 a year.

Somebody who earns a million dollars gets \$90,000 a year of tax benefit—\$90,000 for an already, well-off, rich individual, and \$90 for ordinary families struggling to get on its feet.

#### REMEMBERING MELISSA AND MARK HORTMAN

Mr. MERKLEY. I am going to talk about a different aspect of the reconciliation bill, but before I do so, my heart is with the people of Minnesota, who have lost Melissa and Mark Hortman. Melissa was speaker of the house. As a former speaker of the house in Oregon, I know the type of effort that goes into coordinating a legislative session and commitment to so many different policy issues, striving to build a better State, a better State of Minnesota.

And Melissa and Mark are no longer with us because of an act of hate, an act of violence, something that so goes against the vision of free speech and free assembly in America, where we can come together and argue our points and disagree profoundly with each other, but out of that stew of

ideas comes policies that hopefully take us forward, not violence that takes us to the grave.

So, again, my heart is with Melissa and Mark's family and the people of Minnesota.

And I hope we can all work together to end the type of rhetoric, the type of framing that suggests that on the differences that we have, though large on policy, neither side is coming from an evil point of view. We bring differences that have to be worked out in legislatures like the U.S. Senate.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, now, turning to an issue that has to be worked out in our U.S. Senate, is the challenge of having honest budget numbers for the conversation over the reconciliation bill.

Back in 1974, the Senate and House were alarmed over the growing deficits. They were microscopic compared to the type of deficits we have today, but still people said: Let's not get on that path of expanding the national debt. Let's create a real budgeting process where we lay out a vision at the front end so that the bills that are passed by the committees—the revenue bills and the policy bills—fit into that budget framework so we will have control over the result, whether it is a surplus that we want or whether we want to spend more and run up some deficit because, perhaps, it is a year in which the economy is dipping, and we need to provide some stimulus. But the point was a front-end budgeting process into which we could put the effects of all of these different bills in the course of a year.

So it was an act designed to bring planning for revenue and spending levels into a coherent framework by laying out a budget and holding committees accountable to that budget vision.

In this Budget Act, Congress created two significant tools for very different and separate purposes. One of them is section 312 of the Budget Act. Section 312 says that the Committee on the Budget will establish estimates of "the levels of new budget authority, outlays, direct spending, new entitlement authority, and revenues for a fiscal year." So there is the framework.

And to clarify, for most of the work that is done, the committee depends on the Joint Committee on Taxation for revenue projections and depends on the Congressional Budget Office for the cost of programs.

But this section in 312 has also been interpreted to give the chair of the Budget Committee the authority to resolve complex scoring questions that come up or technical ambiguities that come up on particular programs for particular revenue measures during normal legislating.

I emphasize "during normal legislating." It has nothing to do with reconciliation.

Now, Congress created a second tool that was specifically about reconcili-

ation. It is presented in the Budget Act and for a very special purpose. This section, reconciliation, was to be a filibuster-free pathway in the Senate for one reason and one reason alone: decreasing the deficit.

And you can imagine: There is Robert Byrd, who is the champion of the filibuster, who wants everything to have to go through a supermajority vote. It was often used against civil rights bills but was often used in other ways as well. And he would not let go of that for any reason, except the special role of reducing the national deficit.

A hundred Senators said yes to that vision—all the Democrats, all the Republicans.

So we have in that act a section 313, affectionately known as the Byrd rule, that lays out some very specific details for how to handle that reconciliation process.

So we have section 312, normal budgeting, for nonreconciliation bills, and we have section 313 with special rules for reconciliation bills.

Now, why am I coming to the floor to make such a detailed examination of issues that we wouldn't normally, well, wrestle with in a public forum. Well, the answer is because there is a plan afoot to take this tool that was always used and framed for regular budgeting to give a bit of flexibility to the Budget Committee through the Budget chair to resolve complex technicalities or abnormalities—issues—on small issues in normal bills and apply it in a completely corrupted version to section 313, overruling the foundation for reconciliation. Two very different tools, two very different purposes, but taking one and applying it to the other destroys the integrity of the reconciliation process, and I am going to lay that out in some detail.

Section 312 allows the Budget chair to be a referee, to find bipartisan common ground to solve those ambiguities in the budgets—but, again, never used in reconciliation because it wasn't intended for that purpose.

Now, if you are going to have a special process to reduce deficits, you have to agree to have honest numbers. So, therefore, the act created the Congressional Budget Office to give us those honest numbers on what programs cost.

And then you have honest integrity with numbers on revenue coming from the Joint Committee on Taxation.

So you have these two institutions and a commitment in section 313 to honest budgeting numbers. So we will quit fooling ourselves, and we will quit fooling the public because the goal was to reduce the deficit, and you can't reduce the deficit if you are lying about what new measures will cost, whether it be revenue measures or they be policy measures.

So it would completely defeat the purpose of reconciliation to simply have the Budget chair, who could resolve a technical ambiguity in a normal bill, be able to say: Well, that is