

kidnapping and detention of United States citizens and dual nationals, support to proxy forces attacking United States personnel and interests, cyberattacks against United States infrastructure and entities, and the continued enrichment of uranium close to levels that could be used to develop a nuclear weapon and beyond what is necessary for any conceivable civilian purposes.

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. HUSTED. Mr. President, I have four requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing in open sessions on nominations.

##### COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to consider nominations.

##### COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 10:15 a.m., to conduct an executive business meeting.

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 3 p.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Rani Elwy and Ian Newsome from my staff be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this Congress.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I have come tonight to the floor to talk about fiscal responsibility and how important it is that we preserve or, at least, advance a structure in which we engage with integrity in budgeting, so we don't run up massive debts that affect the opportunities for the generation to come.

One of the things I have been very aware of during the 17 years I have been here is that I hear a lot of conversation from my colleagues across the aisle about fiscal responsibility.

But let's be clear, the majority of the debt run up over the last 20 years has

come from the Republican side of the aisle. It has been the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. Those alone account for \$8 trillion.

And if we turn the clock back just a little bit more, we had the 2001 Bush tax cuts, the 2003 Bush tax cuts, the 2017 Trump tax cut—each of them producing an ocean of red ink by cutting taxes for the richest Americans.

Is that any way to run a country? Cutting programs for families to fund tax breaks for mega millionaires and billionaires? Well, apparently. And in the process, massive, massive debt.

Now, my Republican colleagues have engaged repeatedly in this myth—this myth that somehow the tax breaks for billionaires will result in so much increase in revenue because the economy will hum along. Every single time, it is a lie. It is a deception. It never happens. Instead, revenue plummets, and we indebt our country far into the future.

Let's look at another version of the world. Every time there is a Republican administration, if you look at the first year compared to the last year, deficits go up. Every time there is a Democratic administration, first year to the last year, deficits go down.

Here we are at another moment where we are about to make a decision related to another Republican bill that will create another red sea of debt—some \$3-plus trillion over 10 years, some \$30-plus trillion of debt compared to current law over 30 years.

Now, the very fact that I am mentioning 30 years points out something new and different being put forward by my Republican colleagues; that is, that under reconciliation, you have only been allowed under the rules, in law, under section 313 of the Budget Act, to incur deficits in the first 10 years but not after the first 10 years. So there was no need for a 30-year estimate because that simply was not allowed.

As long as we are looking at what has been allowed under the law and how things have changed, let's look at the structure of what happened to the fairly magnificent 1974 Budget and Impoundment Control Act. And why do I say magnificent? Because all 100 Senators—everyone on the blue side of the aisle, everyone on the right side of the aisle—said “We have to get the deficits under control”—1974.

Well, what had the deficits been in the 3 years before? In 1971, 1972, 1973, they averaged \$20 billion—\$20 billion. Now our deficits are about \$2 trillion a year. But back then, there was seriousness about getting the budget under control.

So this Budget Control Act had some interesting features. First, it had a process for regular budgeting, and then it had a separate, very special track called reconciliation, and reconciliation was designed only for reducing deficits.

That is why all 100 Senators voted to create a filibuster-free fast track only to reduce deficits. Picture Robert Byrd

of West Virginia, one of the fiercest defenders of the filibuster, but even he voted for this special, filibuster-free path only for reducing deficits—1974.

That act also produced the Congressional Budget Office because another piece of the vision was, let's have honesty in numbers.

You know, every time we would come to a budget, one team or the other, whoever was in charge, kind of uses some smoke and mirrors to pretend the impact on the budget is more favorable than it really is. So we needed an organization that is impartial, nonpartisan, that will do the modeling and give us the best information for us to be able to understand the consequences of the provisions in law we are proposing.

Well, that was 1974 that all of that was done. For the 22 years that followed, that filibuster-free fast track, that special reconciliation fast track, was only used for deficit reduction because that is what it was created for.

But in 1996, my Republican colleagues had the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate, and they undertook some, well, bold, new initiatives. One of those was to do a line-item veto for the President. Guess what? The Supreme Court struck that down because the Constitution says it is the responsibility of Congress, not the President of the United States of America, to lay out the decisions about how much is going to be spent on what programs. The Executive executes the law, but we here write the law.

The Supreme Court said: No, no, no. You can't do that. If you want to cut a program, you can't ask the President to do that; you have to do it yourself.

Then there was a second initiative. That second initiative was called the balanced budget amendment, and the idea was that we would put a new clause in the Constitution that essentially forced us to do much like a State government does—you have to balance the budget.

Well, there were those on the Appropriations and Revenue Committee that said: I don't know that that is the right idea because in a time of crisis, you need to be able to spend more for national security or in a time of recession or depression, you might need to spend more to stimulate the economy.

Well, that amendment needed a two-thirds vote, 67 votes here in the Senate. It got 66. So it did not pass the Senate of the United States of America.

So the Republicans at the time—Robert Dole was the majority leader—said: Well, do you know what we want to do? We want to do a massive tax bill with lots of provisions that cut taxes for the richest Americans.

Then they said: But, you know, the problem is that we will need 60 votes to move that bill off the floor, and the Democrats are not going to agree to a plan that gives away the Treasury to the richest Americans.

So they concocted a plan. They replaced the Parliamentarian. They replaced the Parliamentarian in order to

get a ruling that said the filibuster-free track voted by 100 Senators only for deficit reduction could be used to increase deficits for tax reductions. Wow. My Republican colleagues who were preaching fiscal responsibility destroyed this powerful mechanism that all hundred Senators had agreed to to invoke fiscal responsibility and reduce deficits.

But out of that carnage of 1996—that nuclear option, if you will—came two surviving pieces, and one of those surviving pieces was that any year after the first 10 years in any title, you had to have deficit reductions or deficit neutrality. So whereas the deficit could be increased in the first 10 years, it couldn't be increased in any title in any year following that. So you couldn't even say: Well, a surplus in 2011 adjusts for—or the 11th year adjusts for a deficit in the 12th year. No. Every single year, every single title, deficit-neutral.

The other thing that survived was keeping honest numbers—honest numbers—that we were going to do what section 313 of the law says. Section 313 says that each provision has to be evaluated in terms of its outlays—that is the spending impact—or the revenue impact.

So here is a clause in the proposed law. If we follow that clause, if we enact that law, how will it affect spending and how will it affect revenue? Well, each and every clause has to be costed out in that fashion—a combination of work by the Joint Committee on Taxation on the revenue side and the Congressional Budget Office on the program side. Every clause.

If the clause in the law, the provision in the law, passes, how will it affect things? If it is not in the law, what happens? What is the difference between that? What is the difference between this new proposal and existing law?

OK. Well, now my Republican colleagues—the party that blew up the deficit-reducing pathway all 100 Senators agreed to for the first 10 years—want to blow up the remaining two pillars. Now they want to be able to produce deficits after the first 10 years. That is why CBO is doing a 30-year estimate of the debt created by their bill. No longer is it just a 10-year framework, that 10-year framework that their bill is going to produce some \$3-plus trillion of debt compared to current law, but they have to do a 30-year estimate. Their bill is going to produce over \$30 trillion in debt compared to current law because they are destroying that second pillar—no deficits after 10 years.

The third pillar was to use honesty in numbers, but folks on the other side of the aisle said: We are embarrassed by this massive, debt-creating monster, but we want to pass it because it gives tax breaks to the richest Americans, and that is what we are all about. We are going to cut healthcare for 16 million Americans to give tax breaks to

the richest Americans. We are going to leave 4 million children hungry to give tax breaks to the richest Americans. But that is a little embarrassing that we are also going to run up a massive debt of the United States of America to give tax breaks to the richest Americans.

Do you know what? That not only harms citizens today—I mean, citizens across this country, when they hear about this bill, they go: That is just wrong. It is absolutely wrong to destroy healthcare or housing or education in order to line the nest of the already best off Americans. It is just wrong.

What happened to government by and for the people? Why is the Republican Party pursuing government by and for the powerful, the richest?

That is where this nickname comes from for this bill, the “Big Beautiful Betrayal.” Why is it a betrayal? Because President Trump campaigned on helping families, but the moment he was sworn into office, who was standing behind him? Was it champions for the people? Champions on healthcare? No. Champions on affordable housing? No. Champions on food programs or nutrition? No. Who was standing behind him? Billionaires. Billionaires were standing behind President Trump. So it is the “Big Beautiful Betrayal” because he campaigned on helping families, but the bill he is championing instead hurts families and helps billionaires.

Now, how is it that a law that has been in place for now 51 years can be corrupted—corrupted—to allow deficits beyond year 10? How is it that a law that has been in place for 51 years can be corrupted to stop using the honest numbers that come, evaluating the costs or the revenue impact of each and every provision? How is that possible?

Well, I will tell you how that is possible, and that is, the chair of the Budget Committee said: Hey, there is this provision—it wasn't designed for reconciliation. It was designed to help resolve technical anomalies in regular bills—not for reconciliation, for regular bills. But it gave the Budget Committee the ability to provide some flexibility about evaluating and solving technical anomalies.

So the chair of the Budget Committee has proposed taking that provision that is there in a section of the bill for regular budgeting, that gives some flexibility to the Budget Committee to resolve anomalies, and transporting it over into this other special, filibuster-free pathway designed to decrease deficits to create a phony baseline.

So instead of taking a provision in the proposed law and saying “Well, this provision is here; how much cost would it add?” instead you say “Well, let's take this provision and pretend that if it wasn't here, there would be some other provision, maybe an extension of something that is actually expiring.”

So we will create these phony numbers to try to pretend this doesn't cre-

ate the debt it creates. Here we are, section 312, the chair's authority on regular budgeting being transported into reconciliation.

Stay with me here.

This has never been used in this fashion because the entire law, as written, the instructions for reconciliation say you have to cost out each provision. If the clause is in the proposal, what would it cost compared to the clause not being in the proposal?

Here we are back in regular budgeting, this power that is in section 312 for the chair—that actually says the Budget Committee, not the chair—to resolve an anomaly. Has it ever before been used in a partisan fashion? No. Here are the times it has been used. Never before has it been a partisan thing. It has been Democrats and Republicans together saying we have a knotty little technical problem, for example, like a program that has a new name. Is that costed as a new program? But it is actually an existing program. It has a new name. How do we resolve that? It is that type of little technical difficulty that was always worked out—used in a bipartisan fashion. Again, that power was assigned to the committee, not to the chair.

How else does 312 differ in the past from the present? Well, it has never been used on a broad bill. It has been used to resolve individual, small, narrow issues, things like the Crime Victims Fund, things like the Power Marketing Administrations, things like double counting of a dairy program—little narrow provisions, not on a systematic billwide basis, not at all. No, never done. Again, only done in a bipartisan fashion on very narrow provisions.

How else does it differ? Well, it has always been used to resolve this technical ambiguity challenge, some little anomaly that occurs in a bipartisan fashion on a narrow bill. But here, it is being used systemically across an entire bill to create a fake baseline to pretend that those provisions that cost money don't actually cost money because instead of comparing that provision to the provision not being in the law, we will compare it to pretending the provision would have been in the law even if we didn't put it into the law. That is as phony as it could possibly get. It destroys integrity completely.

Has it ever been used in a reconciliation bill? No, because there are special instructions for the reconciliation bill. They are laid out in sections 310 and 313. In 312, for regular budgeting, power is to the Budget Committee—not the chair but to the committee—to resolve ambiguities.

Finally, let's just look at the type of money that was associated with these narrow programs. Crime Victims Fund, \$73 million. Sounds like a lot. The largest provision it has ever been used for is adjustments in the Fiscal Responsibility Act—again, on a bipartisan basis, on a contained program—\$2.8 billion.

What are we talking about now? We are talking about trying to hide \$37 trillion in debt, new debt.

Wow.

To every colleague on either side of the aisle who has back home said we need to get our deficit under control, this is not the bill for you. This bill creates over \$3 trillion in debt compared to current law over just a 10-year period. Our debt is already over 100 percent of our GDP.

I talked to a number of colleagues, and they said: Well, we have to hold it to 100 percent of our GDP. We are already, like, 120 percent, meaning the debt is in the high thirties—about \$36.5 trillion—and our gross domestic product, our entire economy, everything it creates in a single year, is about \$28 trillion.

So the debt is now much larger than everything our economy produces in a single year. That is the danger zone, folks, because you start to enter a debt vortex. And the debt vortex means the debt has gotten so high that the interest rates are starting to eat up the budget. So to fund our military security and our basic healthcare, housing, and education programs, well, we have to borrow more money. That is what this bill does. It borrows, borrows, borrows as far as the eye can see.

Again, colleagues on both sides of the aisle—my Democratic colleagues, my Republican colleagues—if you have ever said a word about fiscal responsibility, do not accept this corruption of allowing a provision to be used to create a fake baseline. We solved that together—100 Senators. We solved it 51 years ago by creating the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, to give us honest, nonpartisan estimates. Don't create phony baselines.

In the future, which other party will it be? Maybe it will be this side of the aisle that wants to use a phony baseline.

We agreed together not to do this. This was not just a handshake. This was a vote. This is the law. Do not corrupt it and work with us for a different vision, not a vision of families lose because that is what happens in this bill—16 million people losing healthcare, 4 million children go hungry to fund tax breaks and giveaways for the richest Americans. That is not a vision.

Join us and rewrite this bill. Let's reduce the deficit it creates. Let's reduce the total debt it creates. And, certainly, let's not create provisions that allow there to be deficits beyond the 10-year window. Let's keep the honesty of using nonpartisan numbers, not phony baselines. Let's create the integrity of sticking with the no deficits after 10 years. Let's do that with the vision of families thriving and billions paying their fair share.

#### APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, pursuant to the provisions of 10

U.S.C. 4355(a), as amended by Public Law 118-159, on behalf of the Democratic Leader, appoints the following individual to serve as a member of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Military Academy: the Honorable TIM Kaine of Virginia.

The Chair, pursuant to the provisions of 10 U.S.C. 4355(a), as amended by Public Law 118-159, on behalf of the Ranking Member of the Committee on Armed Services, appoints the following individual to serve as a member of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Military Academy: the Honorable ELISSA B. SLOTKIN of Michigan (Committee on Armed Services).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). The Senator from Ohio.

#### RURAL BROADBAND PROTECTION ACT OF 2025

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 48, S. 98.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 98) to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a vetting process for prospective applicants for high-cost universal service program funding.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. HUSTED. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. HUSTED. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the bill, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 98) was passed as follows:  
S. 98

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Rural Broadband Protection Act of 2025".

#### SEC. 2. VETTING PROCESS FOR PROSPECTIVE HIGH-COST UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND APPLICANTS.

Section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 254) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(m) VETTING OF HIGH-COST FUND RECIPIENTS.—

"(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection—

"(A) the term 'covered funding' means any new offer of high-cost universal service program funding, including funding provided through a reverse competitive bidding mechanism provided under this section, for the deployment of a broadband-capable network and the provision of supported services over the network; and

"(B) the term 'new covered funding award' means an award of covered funding that is made based on an application submitted to the Commission on or after the date on which rules are promulgated under paragraph (2).

"(2) COMMISSION RULEMAKING.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Commission shall initiate a rulemaking proceeding to establish a vetting process for applicants for, and other recipients of, a new covered funding award.

"(3) CONTENTS.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—In promulgating rules under paragraph (2), the Commission shall provide that, consistent with principles of technology neutrality, the Commission will only award covered funding to applicants that can demonstrate that they meet the qualifications in subparagraph (B).

"(B) QUALIFICATIONS DESCRIBED.—An applicant for a new covered funding award shall include in the initial application a proposal containing sufficient detail and documentation for the Commission to ascertain that the applicant possesses the technical, financial, and operational capabilities, and has a reasonable business plan, to deploy the proposed network and deliver services with the relevant performance characteristics and requirements defined by the Commission and as pledged by the applicant.

"(C) EVALUATION OF PROPOSAL.—The Commission shall evaluate a proposal described in subparagraph (B) against—

"(i) reasonable and well-established technical, financial, and operational standards, including the technical standards adopted by the Commission in orders of the Commission relating to Establishing the Digital Opportunity Data Collection (WC Docket No. 19-195) (or orders of the Commission relating to modernizing any successor collection) for purposes of entities that must report broadband availability coverage; and

"(ii) the applicant's history of complying with requirements in Commission and other government broadband deployment funding programs.

"(D) PENALTIES FOR PRE-AUTHORIZATION DEFAULTS.—In adopting rules for any new covered funding award, the Commission shall set a penalty for pre-authorization defaults of at least \$9,000 per violation and may not limit the base forfeiture to an amount less than 30 percent of the applicant's total support, unless the Commission demonstrates the need for lower penalties in a particular instance."

Mr. HUSTED. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

#### PROMOTING RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS ACT OF 2025

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 50, S. 257.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 257) to improve the resilience of critical supply chains, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with amendments, as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are in boldfaced brackets, and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are in italic.)