

BLUMENTHAL, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. SMITH, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 2201. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit panic defenses based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. BUDD, and Mr. LANKFORD):

S. 2202. A bill to modify the responsibilities and authorities of the Director of National Intelligence, to reform the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and for other purposes; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE:

S.J. Res. 60. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Emissions Budget and Allowance Allocations for Indiana Under the Revised Cross-State Air Pollution Rule Update"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 317

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the names of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGOS) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 317, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify and extend the deduction for charitable contributions for individuals not itemizing deductions.

S. 383

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 383, a bill to extend Federal Pell Grant eligibility of certain short-term programs.

S. 623

At the request of Mr. KENNEDY, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 623, a bill to prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency from using assessments generated by the Integrated Risk Information System as a tier 1 data source in rulemakings and other regulatory, enforcement, or permitting actions, and for other purposes.

S. 749

At the request of Ms. MURKOWSKI, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 749, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend increased dependency and indemnity compensation paid to surviving spouses of veterans who die from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, regardless of how long the veterans had such disease prior to death, and for other purposes.

S. 1555

At the request of Ms. ERNST, the names of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. YOUNG) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. HICKENLOOPER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1555, a bill to increase loan limits for loans made to

small manufacturers, and for other purposes.

S. 1763

At the request of Mr. YOUNG, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1763, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make permanent the 7-year recovery period for motorsports entertainment complexes.

S. 1911

At the request of Mr. RICKETTS, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1911, a bill to amend the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 to codify the Panel of Health Advisors within the Congressional Budget Office, and for other purposes.

S. 1926

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1926, a bill to encourage reduction of disposable plastic products in units of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 307

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 307, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate in support of the recent United States and Israeli military strikes on Iran.

NOTICE OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDING

I, Senator RICHARD J. DURBIN, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of David Metcalf, of Pennsylvania, to be United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for the term of four years, dated June 27, 2025.

I, Senator RICHARD J. DURBIN, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Bart McKay Davis, of Idaho, to be United States Attorney for the District of Idaho for the term of four years, dated June 27, 2025.

I, Senator RICHARD J. DURBIN, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Ronald A. Parsons, Jr., of South Dakota, to be United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota for the term of four years, dated June 27, 2025.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about debt and the challenge that confronts us.

Over the last few decades, we have seen a lot of sources of red ink. Among them are the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq. We saw the first Bush tax bill in 2001, massive red ink; 2003, massive red ink; Trump's tax bill in 2017, an ocean of red ink. I don't think anyone here would argue that these decisions didn't result in significant defi-

cits and significant additions to the debt.

Yet there is so much conversation here about fiscal responsibility and let's get this under control. Yet we see time and time again this body vote, under Republican leadership, for another ocean of red ink, another massive deficit, adding to an already bloated debt that so profoundly compromises the ability of our Nation to address issues in the next generation.

We are borrowing from the next generation, making it less likely that we can effectively provide the programs, the foundation of healthcare and housing and education and the investment in R&D that produces good-paying jobs for the next generation to thrive.

That is wrong. It is wrong to proceed to borrow and compromise the next generation in order to give tax breaks to billionaires. Wow.

You know, there are purposes for when we do need to borrow: when we are facing a recession and when we are facing a war. But we haven't been in a recession. We haven't been at war; although, we clearly had an attack on Iran. Maybe we are at war now, maybe not. We will see if the cease-fire holds. But we are not in a position yet where we should be proceeding to say this current year we should be creating even more deficits.

But the bill before us doesn't create this massive new additional ocean of red ink for the purpose of addressing a war nor to address a recession but, instead, for the lofty purpose of enriching the richest Americans.

I must say that driving 16 million people off of healthcare to give tax breaks to megamillionaires and billionaires may make the megamillionaires and billionaires who are serving in this Chamber quite happy, but it doesn't make America better.

I must say that leaving 4 million children hungry has a devastating impact on their ability to study and learn and thrive in their lives to come. And to do it for tax breaks for billionaires may make my colleagues who are really rich really happy, but it is really wrong.

In addition, my colleagues just aren't creating a sea of debt; they are also cutting down the bipartisan structure designed for Congress to exercise discipline over deficits and debt.

That architecture was crafted in 1974, the Budget and Impoundment Control Act, normally referred to as the Budget Act, the 1974 Act. It came about because two things were going on: One is that President Nixon had impounded funds, and the Supreme Court said, no, you can't do that. That is unconstitutional. You can't steal the power of the purse. In the Constitution, that power of the purse is given to Congress.

Senators were very concerned about the deficits that were existing in 1971, and 1972, and 1973. They averaged \$20 billion a year. They totaled \$60 billion. I can tell you that now when our deficit is running at something closer to

\$2 trillion a year, \$20 billion doesn't sound like much of a cause for alarm. But that is how determined 100 Senators were to get control over our budgeting process. All hundred voted for this structure, the Budget Control Act.

It had two basic features. It had a regular budgeting process, and then, for legislation that reduced the deficit, it had a special, fast-track, filibuster-free lane called reconciliation. But you could only use it for reducing the deficit.

That special, fast-track, filibuster-free lane really meant a lot here in the Senate because we are the ones who have the 60-vote requirement. The House doesn't have a requirement for 60 votes, for three-fifths of the body on anything. So it was really all about here, about the Senate's sense that we should only drop to 60 votes for bills that reduced the deficit.

Embedded in this were three fundamental provisions, three pillars of the architecture of getting control of deficits and debt. The first was that in the first 10 years that are presented in a reconciliation bill, the sum of the 10 years has to produce deficit reduction. That was pillar No. 1.

The second pillar was that in every single year that follows the first 10, it has to produce deficit reduction. It has to save money.

And the third was honest numbers. We are going to use honest numbers. We are going to create this organization, the Congressional Budget Office, and we are going to utilize it to cost out programs, do the modeling, be non-partisan. Then we are going to utilize this other organization that already existed, the Joint Committee on Taxation, to have their staff produce honest, nonpartisan numbers for the cost of revenue provisions.

The section of the law that controls this special reconciliation process says each provision, whether for a spending program or for revenue, has to be costed out in order to be able to hold ourselves accountable. If the provision is written down and it changes the law, how much will that cost? If the provision is not in the law, not in the proposed law, then, obviously, that is different than if the provision is in the law. New law versus existing law, that is what section 313 says is going to be costed out to see if we are meeting the goals laid out in the budget resolution. That is the discipline.

Those were the three things: No deficits created in the first 10 years; second, no deficits created in any year following the first 10 years; and, third, honest numbers about what each provision costs. Those are the three things.

Well, that was in 1974. You can picture Robert Byrd, who was a passionate defender of the 60-vote requirement, but he voted for this special, fast-track, filibuster-free lane for that one purpose: reducing deficits.

That was 1974. Well, 22 years later, along comes a moment when you have

a Republican Senate and a Republican House. And the Republicans said: Do you know what, we like this idea of a line-item veto, so they passed it. Fine. But the Supreme Court said that is unconstitutional because the Constitution says the power of the purse lies with Congress, not with the President—something that our current Office of Management and Budget and our Director of Management and Budget doesn't like and is contesting and told me he wants the Supreme Court to overrule what it ruled back then.

The second idea was to do a balanced budget amendment. But the Republican chair of Appropriations stood up and said: Do you know what, sometimes you need to spend more because of conflict; sometimes you need to spend more because of recession. And so, no, we shouldn't have a formalistic formula. And he refused to vote for it, and the proposal failed one vote short of the 67 it needed.

OK. But then the Republican majority said: But you know, we have got this other idea. We have got all these really rich and powerful corporations and individuals, and we want to give them a massive, beautiful tax cut and make them even more richer and powerful. They will love us, and they will keep us in power. What a win-win, to give away the Treasury to the richest people in this country.

But they had a problem. There was no filibuster-free, fast-track lane that allowed creating a deficit.

So what did they do? They fired the Parliamentarian. That is what they did. They brought in a new Parliamentarian, a Parliamentarian who had actually been on the parliamentary team back in 1974, a Parliamentarian who had then left that Parliamentarian team and gone to work for the majority leader and then came back off the majority leader's staff to rule and say: That deal that was crafted with all 100 Senators, we are going to break that deal. We are going to do a nuclear option. We are going to blow it up. We are going to say that this fast track can be used to create deficits in the first 10 years.

So there went pillar 1.

Pillar 2 has survived until now, until this moment: No deficits after the first 10 years.

Pillar 3—use honest numbers—has survived until now: Use the CBO numbers, use the comparison of a provision as described in section 313 and honestly relay what it costs for a program or for a revenue provision.

And I say "until now" because my colleague, whom I love to work with on a number of things, has an idea. And he said: There is a provision not in the section of the law that exists for reconciliation but in the section of the law as it deals with just the regular budget process that was created in 1974 that gives the budget chair some flexibility to solve technical problems, and I think I can use that to simply decree a new baseline so that things that ac-

tually cost a ton of money, we can tell the American people and ourselves they don't cost money.

Well, let's see. Here are some examples: the business passthrough. The Joint Committee on Taxation, pass-through for LLCs, says this revision in the law will cost \$736 billion. My good friend across the aisle says: I want to use a magic baseline to show things cost less. He says: We will use a technique here, some magic math, and tell the people that it only costs \$6 billion, even though the Joint Committee on Taxation tells us it costs \$736 billion, and reduce it to less than 1 percent of the true cost.

Let's take another example. There is a provision that extends the estate and gift tax exemptions. The honest broker, the Joint Committee on Taxation, says putting that provision in the bill will cost, as in increasing deficits and increasing the debt, \$212 billion. But my colleague across the aisle says: I want to tell people it doesn't really cost that—it only costs \$10 billion—by using my baseline as opposed to the honest baseline that we have used ever since 1974 passed, when 100 Senators said: Let's stop using smoke and mirrors and let's use honest numbers.

Or how about the exemptions being expanded for the alternative minimum tax? The cost of that, from the Joint Committee on Taxation: \$1.37 trillion. That is with a "t," trillion—\$1.37 trillion.

My good colleague across the aisle says: Using my magic math and my special baseline, that won't increase the deficit; it will actually reduce the deficit by \$6 billion.

Are you kidding me? We are going to destroy the principle, for 51 years, that we will use honest numbers with ourselves and honest numbers with the American people; and in the process, we are tearing down that second pillar that reconciliation will never be used to extend deficits past the reconciliation window of 10 years—because, you see, that has never been allowed by either party, never done.

In fact, the ruling in 1996, the one that tore down that it can only be used for deficits in the first 10 years, that ruling was explicit in reaffirming the second pillar of no deficits after 10 years.

So we have the plain language of the law. We have 51 years of precedent. We have the ruling from 1996. But my colleague says: I want to use magic math to pretend this bill doesn't cost what it costs.

Well, let's take a closer look at the provision that my colleague, the chair of the Budget Committee, is using. It is called section 312. Let's see how it has been used. Let's see if it has ever been used on reconciliation. Let's see if it has ever been used completely on the breadth of an entire reconciliation bill.

Let's start by asking the question: Has it ever been used in a partisan way? Well, in 2017, Crime Victims

Fund—no, no—a bipartisan decision. In 2023 and 2025, Power Marketing Administration: bipartisan. They were solving a technical issue, both parties working on it together. Preventing double counting of a dairy program: bipartisan. Adjustments to Fiscal Responsibility Act: bipartisan.

It has become traditional to say this power in section 312 rests with the chair of the Budget Committee, but that is not true. The law says it rests with the Budget Committee. The reason we think of it as resting with the chairman is because it has always been done in a bipartisan way, with the Democrats and Republicans together saying: We are solving a problem.

The second question: Has it ever been used on the breadth of a reconciliation bill or only upon a narrow provision? Well, it turns out, in every single case—the Crime Victims Fund, the Power Marketing, the dairy program, the Fiscal Responsibility Act—always a narrow provision. But not now.

How else can we take a look at this? How about if we look at whether it was resolving a technical ambiguity. Yep. Every single time, resolving a technical problem, in bipartisan fashion, narrow provision.

And most importantly, has this provision of 312, which is not in the section that controls reconciliation, ever been used in reconciliation? Nope. Not in 2017, not in 2023 through 2025, not on the dairy program, not on the Fiscal Responsibility Act—not ever. Never used in reconciliation.

So, colleagues, two big issues are here. Are you really going to invoke, for a bill that causes over \$3 trillion in debt over 10 years compared to current law—are you really going to invoke, for a reconciliation bill that, for the first time, continues that “Red Sea” in years 11 through 30—11 years, 30 years out, extending beyond the 10-year window, in direct violation of the ruling of the Parliamentarian in 1996, in direct violation of a section of 313 that says that only—you cannot run deficits after that?

You know, those 30-year estimates, over \$30 trillion of additional debt from this bill. Now, our current debt is pretty high: \$37 trillion. This adds another \$30 trillion-plus.

And the Congressional Budget Office costed out what happens if the interest rates are 1 percent higher than they put in the model—1 percent higher. And of course, it is easy to imagine that we could be off by 1 percent. So 1 percent higher, and the cost isn't \$30 trillion; it is closer to \$60 trillion—1 percent higher—of additional debt over 30 years. They said it would add another \$24 trillion on top of the over \$32 trillion to begin with.

Are you really going to vote for a bill that uses dishonest numbers?

So here is one reason to vote against this bill: It is a massive debt creator,

primarily to give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans.

Here is the second reason: It tears down programs in healthcare and nutrition that are key to the success of our children and families who are in the 20 percent less affluent in America.

Here is a third reason: It creates debt far into the future, beyond the 10-year window, that will compromise the ability of us to address the challenges of America for decades and decades to come. It is really an attack on the next generation.

Here is a fourth reason: It tears down the framework of accountability, the last two standing pillars, crafted by 100 Senators all voting yes in 1974.

I encourage my colleagues, as they get together in their caucuses on the blue side of the aisle or the red side of the aisle, to say: Let's hold on. This is wrong. This is not what the President campaigned on. He campaigned on being a champion for families—not for billionaires, to screw over families, to make the rich richer. Wow.

Just that extension of the alternative minimum tax is going to cost \$1,368,932,000,000. Wow. In other words, almost \$1.4 trillion. What ordinary family uses an exemption under the alternative minimum tax? It is the megawealthy.

They listed it under chapter 1, which they titled “Tax Relief for Middle Class Families.” Find me a middle-class family in which this alternative tax exemption applies.

So we are just days away from voting on this. We are going through the Byrd bath, in which different policies are examined and, if they are primarily a policy, they are not allowed in here. That was part of the rules that were crafted long ago for the special fast-track reconciliation. Then we have 20 hours of debate, and then we have amendments.

We are very close to the point of making this tragic mistake. And I know that many of my new colleagues who were just recently sworn in, in January, have been folks who said we need fiscal discipline. You can't campaign on fiscal discipline and tell your constituents you are going to uphold that after you take office and then come here and not only vote for this massive debt but tear down, at the same time, the last two pillars of the architecture for controlling deficits this year and into the future. That doesn't square, so don't do it.

I will close by saying this is not the first time we have been down this road. And there are a few myths that people tell themselves to justify this: We will only do this once. In 2001, it was once. In 2003, it was twice; 2017 was the third time.

We are doing the same damn thing again: mortgaging our future and helping increase wealth inequality in this country by doing all these special provisions for really rich people. We have

done it now—this is the fourth time. Don't pretend you are fooled, like you didn't get it, because we have been down this road before. It is the wrong road.

“Families lose, billionaires win” is the wrong mission for America. It is the wrong mission for the U.S. Senate. The right mission is “Families thrive, and billionaires pay their fair share.”

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The majority leader.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—H.R. 1

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I now ask for a second reading, and in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2025

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 28; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 2 P.M. TOMORROW

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 7:33 p.m., adjourned until Saturday, June 28, 2025, at 2 p.m.