

This summer, the GAO, the Government Accountability Office, identified \$65 billion—that is billion with a “b”—still in COVID slush funds. Let’s close the book, return to reality, and give taxpayers the accountability they have long demanded—because, yes, their hard-earned money ended up paying for binge-drinking monkeys in Oregon. What? Let’s hear you all say: What? It is unbelievable, but it is true. The Oregon Health and Science University raked in more than \$1.8 million for this. In one study, monkeys were fed 8 to 16 alcoholic drinks a day to see how their chronic boozing affects COVID-19. Taxpayers didn’t sign up for that, and it is long past time we put a stop to it.

Let me also give you some examples of unspent COVID funds.

Three million dollars is sitting in an account for museum and library services for COVID.

There is \$390 million for USAID’s Emergency Connectivity Fund for educational connections and devices. USAID is no more, so these millions should have been returned to taxpayers yesterday.

Four million dollars for international broadcasting operations at the Millennium Challenge Corporation. I challenge you to find any American on the street who would want their tax dollars going toward COVID funds for international broadcasting 6 years after the COVID pandemic.

Mr. President, \$389 million in COVID funds sits unspent for HHS program management. I think they have managed COVID enough.

One million dollars for USDA’s marketing services. USDA. I can tell you that Iowa farmers would much prefer these funds be put toward a better use.

One million dollars for an account that just simply says “science” at the State Department, OK? So let me tell you, my friend Secretary Rubio is holding down a lot of different jobs—but “science”? Let’s give that COVID “science” money back to taxpayers.

Those are just a few examples. I have tracked 82 program accounts—82 program accounts—with remaining COVID funding.

My Returning Unspent COVID Funds Act is very simple. The COVID pandemic was 6 years ago. It is past time for the unspent COVID funds to be clawed back. Let’s pass my bill and send these funds back to the treasury.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 266, S. 3166. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I am going to make just a few brief points in response to Senator ERNST’s proposal.

This bill would rescind each dollar of unspent funding from emergency

supplementals, including funds America needs to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. For example, the Trump administration is using this funding right now—that is right now—to address an Ebola outbreak.

Rescinding this funding makes America less safe. The point of the Rapid Response Reserve Fund is to have money in case there is a need for a rapid response.

This funding can save lives. This bill would further rescind funding for medical supply chain development, manufacturing, and production to develop products like a universal flu vaccine to prevent the next pandemic. And it rescinds funding available to build a stronger healthcare workforce for nurses and disease specialists who can address emergency interventions.

I want to say to my colleague: We have always worked well together, and I would be glad to work with her and other colleagues to have a comprehensive look at what should and should not be rescinded because of the discussion that we have just had.

That is something that should be done as part of the appropriations process, not, in my view, through this legislation.

For that reason, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). The objection is heard.

The Senator from Louisiana.

S.J. RES. 82

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, this well-meaning CRA is not needed. For decades, Congress has allowed Agencies to fast-track regulations on bureaucratic topics that do not impact the public. The policy that is sought to be overturned merely aligns HHS policy with this longstanding exemption. It does not change the process for major regulations that impact the public.

The courts have weighed in repeatedly on Agency processes for issuing regulations. Fast-track procedures can only be used in a narrow set of circumstances.

If there is a concern about the HHS policy, the goal should be to change the law, not pass this CRA.

There has been an implication that reductions in force would have gone through rulemaking if HHS still had the Richardson waiver in place. That is actually not true. The reductions in force are governed by an Office of Personnel Management regulation implemented by HHS.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

Mr. TILLIS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES).

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 641 Leg.]

YEAS—50

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

NAYS—49

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

NOT VOTING—1

Daines

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 49. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RELATING TO “POLICY ON ADHERING TO THE TEXT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE ACT”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 82) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services relating to “Policy on Adhering to the Text of the Administrative Procedure Act”.

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 senior assistant legislative 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 Executive Calendar No. 4, S. Res. 532, an executive resolution authorizing the en bloc consideration

in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar.

John Thune, John Cornyn, Steve Daines, Bernie Moreno, Roger Marshall, Chuck Grassley, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Rick Scott of Florida, Tim Sheehy, Pete Ricketts, Jon Husted, Tom Cotton, John R. Curtis, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, Josh Hawley, Todd Young.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. Res. 532, an executive resolution authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. Paul).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 642 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—47

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

NOT VOTING—2

Daines Paul

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 47. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

An executive resolution (S. Res. 532) authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, this week, we have an opportunity to lower healthcare costs for the American people. For months, my Republican colleagues have refused to extend existing Affordable Care Act tax credits that help nearly 22 million Americans afford quality healthcare. These tax credits have been one of the single most successful tools to ensure that every American has access to the care they need.

As we near the end of the healthcare enrollment period for the new year, Michiganders are experiencing the real-world consequences of Republicans' actions. Right now, folks across Michigan are shopping for 2026 healthcare coverage. When they log on to the Marketplace, they are seeing staggering—staggering—price hikes for the exact same coverage they currently have.

For example, this year, an average plan for a 26-year-old living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula costs about \$340 a month. Next year, that monthly payment is scheduled to double, costing them \$600 to \$800 per month.

A family of four living in Detroit paid \$980 a month in 2025 for the average plan. What that same plan will cost now if Republicans allow these essential healthcare credits to expire—well, that family is now going to be paying \$2,700 a month.

Finally, let's take a 64-year-old couple living in Kent County. They currently pay roughly a \$600 monthly premium for their coverage, but soon that cost will be over \$2,000 a month for just their premium if Republicans continue to block these healthcare credits.

Remember, these monthly costs don't even count towards their deductibles. Folks will still have to pay more before their insurance even kicks in.

It is simply unacceptable to let these subsidies expire, and every single Member of Congress knows it. Working families cannot afford these increases without sacrificing other necessities, especially as inflation is making the cost of everyday goods more expensive.

We know the Trump tariffs are adding thousands of dollars of costs to the average family each and every year. As a result, too many families are being forced to make a gut-wrenching decision to go without their healthcare coverage altogether.

According to data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services, nearly 14,000 fewer Michiganders have enrolled in the Affordable Care Act plan compared to this time last year. That is almost 14,000 Michiganders who may have to go without healthcare all next year because my Republican colleagues refuse to act.

We know that when less people have insurance, it drives up the cost of healthcare for everybody else in the country.

There is no question that America is facing a healthcare affordability crisis, and these credits are the best tool we have to provide some financial relief right now—right now—for families who desperately need it. But Republicans have made it clear time and time again that they are perfectly fine letting this program expire, all the while offering no true alternative vision for how we can keep healthcare costs down for everyday Americans.

But Democrats—we are not going to sit back. We are not going to stall any further. This week, the Senate will vote on a bill that would extend these critical tax credits for 3 years. This commonsense proposal would protect access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare that helps keep American families healthy.

Simply put, if we pass this bill, we could literally save lives. That is exactly why I voted to pass the Affordable Care Act into law during my first time in the U.S. House back in 2009.

This week, I will proudly vote, once again, to make healthcare more affordable and accessible for every American. That is who we are as Democrats. That is what we have always fought for because we believe that access to affordable healthcare is a fundamental right.

For the sake of hard-working Americans in Michigan, as well as all across our country, I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in protecting that fundamental right.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, the Senate is talking a lot about healthcare right now for good reason. There are major cost increases going up on insurance all across the country but especially for some folks that are in ObamaCare Marketplace plans.

I talked earlier this week with a gentleman from my State who is in his early sixties. He runs a small business, works his tail off. His insurance plan that he has taken on, he took on in the last few years because of the enhanced premium tax credit subsidies that were added in 2021. Those temporary tax gifts to insurance companies expire in just a few weeks.

Now, he knew that they would expire. As he told me in our conversation we had this week, he said he knew they were temporary, but now he is trying to figure out what to do to find affordable healthcare options for himself because his healthcare is going to go up about \$500 a month. That is an enormous amount.