

The Republican leader on May 16 told Bloomberg TV that tax reform “will have to be revenue neutral.” These are his words. That is a principle he has advanced for years.

We are not hearing much from Republicans about deficits now. Yet, I repeat, this budget instructs the committees to increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion. It will be difficult for many of my Republican friends to say that they care about deficits and still vote for this budget.

The GOP budget resolution will also be the first time that my Republican colleagues vote to slash Medicare. The budget spells out over \$400 billion in Medicare cuts, as well as over \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts—even more than the healthcare bill, and probably the No. 1 reason for its demise was that huge slash to Medicaid.

So it is going to be difficult for my Republican friends and this Republican Party to say that they want to protect Medicare and Medicaid and still vote for this budget. Unfortunately, this will not be the first time Republicans vote to advance a major piece of legislation—changes to our Tax Code—through a hyperpartisan process known as reconciliation. Reconciliation, as has just been documented in an article—I believe it was in Politico, but in one of our leading publications—was never intended for this type of purpose.

With this vote, though, Republicans are saying from the very outset that they don’t really want Democratic input on this bill because they are setting up a process in which they don’t really need Democratic votes. It is honestly a shame. And just as the partisan reconciliation process portended failure for the Republican healthcare bill, it is likely to portend failure here as well.

It is difficult to pass major legislation in the Senate, as it should be. That is what the Founding Fathers intended. That is the true conservatism of our government: checks and balances, no rush. It is even more difficult if you work only with the votes of one party. As I said, that allows a small few, usually on the hard right, to dictate what is in this bill.

My guess is that the vast majority of people here didn’t want to vote for Medicare and Medicaid cuts, but because they couldn’t get enough votes in the House to pass the budget without putting that in, because maybe 30 or 40 Members there insisted on it, it is in there. It is not going to serve you well. If anyone thinks it doesn’t have real effect, look at the PAYGO rules. This is not just the budget. PAYGO, after this budget passes, would insist on slashes in Medicare, 4 percent. That is the law; that is not a rule.

I hope that our colleagues will vote down this bill, and then I promise you, just as we are doing on healthcare, we can come together in a bipartisan way. That doesn’t mean you get everything you like. It probably means more of the tax cuts go to the middle class and

fewer to the wealthy, but there are lots of people on our side of the aisle who want to see small business get a tax cut, who want to see money from overseas come here and be used for jobs, and who want to see a middle-class tax break. We could come up with a bipartisan bill that would make, for the first time in a long time, this body shine.

The Republican Congress, at least at the moment on the path it is on, has abandoned the grand tradition of bipartisanship, working together, which has made this Chamber great through the decades and centuries.

When Republicans need Democratic votes, they come to us. The President and the leader have said: Come vote with us. Make it bipartisan. That is not what bipartisanship is. You don’t craft a bill just within your party and then say: Voting with us is bipartisan. Bipartisanship means you sit down together and you come out with a proposal that a majority of both parties can support. They are not doing that.

Republicans will spend the entire first year of this Congress trying to pass their major agendas through reconciliation or similar vehicles, first with CRAs, then healthcare, now taxes. The majority leader himself said in a speech, “Restoring the Senate,” in 2014 that “when the Senate is allowed to work the way it was designed to, it arrives at a result acceptable to people all along the political spectrum.” But if it’s an “assembly line for one party’s partisan legislative agenda,” it creates “instability and strife” rather than “good, stable law.”

The American people want to see us work together. We may not always succeed. It may not be easy, but we can try.

As I said—and I would say this to my colleagues—there are areas in which we can agree on taxes: Lower middle-class taxes; don’t raise them. Give some relief to small business. Try to bring the money from overseas and put it into infrastructure and job creation. We can work together, but not in this process and not with this awful bill, which favors the wealthy dramatically, raises taxes on the middle class, hurts the deficit—increases the deficit dramatically—and is a partisan process. I hope my Republican friends keep that in mind when they vote today. If you vote this down, I promise you that we will come together in a bipartisan way and work for something that actually could pass, instead of what happened with healthcare. Try it. Try it. Reconciliation—working with one party—failed miserably for you on healthcare, and now we are coming together. Let’s not repeat the same mistake on taxes.

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY NOMINATION

Finally, Mr. President, I just heard that the nomination of Representative MARINO to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy has been withdrawn. That is the right decision. The fact that he was nominated in the first place is evidence that the Trump ad-

ministration talks the talk but refuses to walk the walk. The bottom line is that this Congressman supported President Trump but is the wrong person for the job, and I am glad they saw it and withdrew.

I want to salute two of my colleagues who were way out in front on this: Senator MANCHIN, whose State has been ravaged by opioids, and Senator MCCASKILL, who has similar problems, particularly in rural areas, but all over. Senator MCCASKILL has legislation that I think would correct the kinds of ills we have seen in Representative MARINO’s proposals, and I hope that in a bipartisan way we can support them.

The opioid crisis demands that the next drug czar be solely focused on getting communities across the country the help they desperately need, and we hope the administration nominates someone who fits that bill so we can pass that nominee quickly and in a bipartisan way.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of David Joel Trachtenberg, of Virginia, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent all remaining time be yielded back.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Trachtenberg nomination?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).