



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2019

No. 5

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SWALWELL of California).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 10, 2019.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ERIC SWALWELL to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2019, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

HOW CLOTURE KILLED THE 115TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks after the 2016 election, I warned on this floor that the greatest obstacle to the success of the Republican Congress and the Trump Presidency was the Senate's cloture rule.

Cloture is the Senate rule that requires 60 votes before a bill can be considered. It was originally designed to

protect the minority's right to debate, but it has now degenerated into a very effective way for the minority to prevent any debate. Today, it gives minority Democrats in the Senate the power to summarily reject almost every measure brought to the Senate.

In 2016, the American people elected a Republican President and Republican majorities in both houses of Congress with a simple plea: Make America Great Again. As a practical matter, this meant reviving the economy, balancing the budget, securing our borders, and rescuing our healthcare system. Having given us all the necessary tools, it had every right to expect action.

If the Republican Congress had proven worthy of this trust, history would have looked back on the last 2 years as the turning point when America reclaimed its greatness and entered a new era of prosperity, solvency, and security. The new 116th Congress would be taking office with a clear mandate to build on that success.

Well, the American people got action from the President. They also got action from this House. We sent the Senate over 1,300 bills, fulfilling every promise made to the American people. The Senate acted on fewer than 300.

Now, did the Senate, which absurdly boasts to be the greatest deliberative body in the world, carefully and meticulously deliberate over these measures and ultimately reject them? No. The greatest deliberative body in the world never took them up at all—all for lack of cloture.

That is not the fault of Senate Democrats, who radically abused this rule as part of the resistance. It is the fault of Senate Republicans who let them.

The only major accomplishments were due to rare instances when cloture could be bypassed. The appointments of Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court occurred only after Senate Republicans

changed this rule, but only for Supreme Court nominations.

The landmark tax reform bill could be taken up and passed in the Senate only by misusing a budget process called reconciliation, which avoids the cloture rule.

Reconciliation is a once-a-year bill designed to control spending. It isn't subject to the 60-vote requirement, but it can only change laws to conform to spending levels set by the budget.

Even then, this proved a mixed political blessing for Republicans. The limits on deducting State and local taxes were all placed in the bill, solely to conform to reconciliation requirements. Republicans got clobbered in the high-tax States where these provisions proved so unpopular.

The tax cuts triggered such dramatic economic growth that Federal revenues increased, yet the deficit continued to widen. Why? Well, spending exploded, in part because House leaders hijacked reconciliation, the most potent tool to control spending, in order to get around the Senate's cloture rule.

Cloture turned healthcare from a winning to a losing issue for Republicans. House Republicans had proposed comprehensive healthcare reforms that rescued Americans from the bureaucratic labyrinth of ObamaCare, restored their freedom of choice, protected those with preexisting conditions, and provided a supportive tax system to guarantee an affordable health plan for every family.

Yet cloture made a comprehensive bill DOA in the Senate, forcing the House to concoct a hodgepodge measure that could fit within the narrow rules for budget reconciliation. This mangled product that resulted couldn't even muster a Senate majority. Since the replacement bill was never enacted, Democrats could portray it any way they wanted. The same story can be told of border security and funding for the long-promised border wall.

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.