

I encourage my colleagues to join me in advancing his nomination.

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 the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 93, Kenneth Kies, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

John Thune, Pete Ricketts, Bill Hagerty, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Roger F. Wicker, John R. Curtis, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Bernie Moreno, Katie Boyd Britt, Mike Lee, Mike Rounds, Deb Fischer, Steve Daines, Rick Scott of Florida, James Lankford, Jon A. Husted, Ted Cruz.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call, under rule XXII, has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kenneth Kies, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, 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. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Nevada (Mrs. CORTEZ MASTO) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 53, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 326 Ex.]

YEAS—53

Banks	Graham	Moreno
Barrasso	Grassley	Mullin
Blackburn	Hagerty	Murkowski
Boozman	Hawley	Paul
Britt	Hoeben	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
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young
Fischer	Moran	

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—3

Coons Cortez Masto Shaheen

(Mr. HAWLEY assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). On this vote, the yeas are 53, the nays are 44.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Kenneth Kies, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are here today to ensure the Senate fulfills its constitutional duties regarding the sole power to involve our Nation in war. An important briefing will take place tomorrow and, perhaps, a vote on this very issue.

Article I, section 8 of the U.S. Constitution clearly states that the power to declare war is an explicit power of Congress. Three words: to declare war. Congress overwhelmingly reaffirmed this constitutional provision when it passed the War Powers Act in 1973 over the veto of President Nixon.

Under the War Powers Act, the President has the authority to approve military attacks as a response to an imminent threat or with the express authorization of Congress. Neither of these were the case with President Trump's decision to bomb Iran over the weekend. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism; wants to destroy Israel and undermine U.S. interests; oppress its own people; and is interested in owning a nuclear weapon. But those are not justifications to ignore the Constitution. If the United States is to start a war with Iran over these or any other issue, the Constitution itself requires it must be with the consent of Congress.

Let me also add that we had an effective agreement that contained Iran's nuclear program—I remember it well under President Obama—that is, until President Trump, in his first term, abruptly withdrew the United States from this agreement, adding to the more volatile situation which we face today.

That is why I support the Senator from Virginia TIM KAINE's War Powers Resolution. It requires a prompt debate and vote prior to using additional U.S. military force against Iran. This Senate should not allow the country to be led into another Middle Eastern war without its consent.

When I reflect on the time that I have served in the Senate, one of the most memorable votes was on the question of the invasion of Iraq. If the Presiding Officer will recall that debate, the argument was being made by the White House that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that we had to preemptively start a war with

that country to stop those weapons from being used against us or our allies. We know what happened. There was a vote on the floor of the Senate. It was about 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock at night. There were 23 of us who voted against the invasion of Iraq—one Republican and 22 Democrats. I believe it was the best vote I ever cast as a Senator. There were no weapons of mass destruction. We were invading a country under a false premise. We were going to wage a war there and, unfortunately, did at the expense of American lives for a long period of time.

This Senate should not be led into another war in the Middle East without the consent of the American people through Congress. Our Founders knew this point: One should never send our sons and daughters into war without the consent of the American people—an argument I have made regardless of who the President has been of either party.

We have already ceded too much congressional power on so many different subjects. I am almost speechless, which is something for a Senator. We are at a point where Congress continues to give away its power and its authority. I don't know how to explain it. I don't know why people would go through the awful challenge of running for office to serve in the U.S. Senate while each and every President tries to take away our authority to appropriate funds, for example; to make critical decisions. And so many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are willing to give that away to their favorite President. Well, when you give away that authority, the next President may not be your favorite, but he will have the authority that you ceded and gave away to your favorite President. We have already ceded too much in appropriations and key items. Let's not do that when it comes to war.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL

Mr. President, on another topic, school may be out for the summer, but I have a pop quiz for the American people who are following us at home. The following statements are about President Trump's so-called Big Beautiful Bill. Try to guess whether a Senate Democrat or a Senate Republican made the following statement:

Statement No. 1:

If we don't watch out, people are going to get hurt, people are going to be upset. It's going to be the number one thing on the nightly news all over the place.

Statement No. 2 in reference to the Big Beautiful Bill:

I'm concerned that if there are cutbacks in some of the Medicaid programs it could have an adverse effect on our rural hospitals . . . Many of them are barely making it now financially.

Statement No. 3 on the subject of slashing Medicaid payments:

This is a whole new system that is going to defund rural hospitals.

If you guessed that all three statements were made by Senate Republicans about the Republican reconciliation bill, you are right. Even my Republican colleagues know that, under Trump's plan, billionaires will win, and American families will lose. The more we learn about this bill, the worse it looks. Perhaps that is why the Senate Republican leader is anxious to pass the bill before the arbitrary Fourth of July deadline.

It is expensive. Yesterday, the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that the Republican proposal will add \$4.2 trillion to our national debt. In Trump's first term—in that 4-year period of time—he added more money to the debt of the United States than any President in 4 years in history. Now he is going to top that number with this new Big Beautiful Bill in adding to our national debt.

Does the proposal borrow against the future to lift millions of children out of poverty or invest in clean energy jobs of the future that will grow our economy? Think again. This bill provides tax breaks to the ultrawealthy.

One of my colleagues did a calculation here. If you make the cutoff point in income of \$400,000 a year and say you won't give any of the new Trump tax breaks to people making more than \$400,000 a year, you eliminate 60 percent of this tax proposal, as 60 percent of it goes to people making over 400,000 a year.

What about the highest level, the 0.1-percent income? The tax break—the permanent tax cut annually—is nearly \$350,000. Come on.

Do you really believe Elon Musk is waiting to see whether this goes through so he can take this tax break and spend it on something worthwhile? Not at all. The richest people in the United States—God bless them—don't need this tax cut. Working families do.

And it is unpopular. A recent FOX News poll—did I say “FOX”?—found that 38 percent of registered voters supported the House-passed bill, and 59 percent opposed it. It is downright mean. This measure will be the most significant healthcare cut in American history as 16 million Americans would lose their health insurance.

I heard one Republican Senator on the news say: Well, that is just health insurance that we are providing for illegal aliens.

He is wrong. Medicaid doesn't cover that. Under Medicaid, of the people who will be denied coverage, 16 million of them are American citizens.

Medicaid cuts will lead to higher copays, longer emergency room wait times, and skyrocketing nursing home expenses.

So many of our senior citizens in my State and in other places or the places that take care of them need a helping hand—nursing facilities and the like. The majority of that is being paid for by Medicaid, and the Republicans want to cut that Medicaid reimbursement. What is that going to do when you are

trying to take care of your mom or your grandmother if you can't afford to keep them in a good place? In an extreme situation, they may have to move in with you, and you would have to change your own lifestyle and your own relationship within the family.

One provision in particular in the Republican bill will cripple the funding mechanism used to keep hospitals afloat. According to the Children's Hospital Association, this provision in the Republican bill will cut funding for most children's hospitals by 42 percent. So, if you have a children's hospital in your town, in your State, at 42 percent, ask them what that will mean in terms of services for the kids they are helping.

Take Children's Mercy. It is the children's hospital in Kansas City serving kids in Missouri and Kansas. Thirty-five percent of its revenue is from Medicaid, and the hospital operates with a 5-percent margin. If you take a chain saw to Medicaid, families with sick kids who trust Children's Mercy will have another worry on their minds, and in red and blue States, rural hospitals will be in jeopardy of closing. For what? For a tax cut for the wealthiest people in America? Really?

Don't take it from me. I recently spoke with the CEO of BJC Healthcare, the largest hospital system in Missouri. A third of their patients are from Illinois, I might add. I asked them about their concern with people losing insurance under this Republican bill. This is BJC out of St. Louis, MO.

BJC Healthcare cares for more Medicaid patients than any other health organization in the region. More than a third of their patients are covered by Medicaid paying for 1 million visits a year. It is the same story for SSM Health, headquartered in St. Louis, operating nine hospitals in Missouri, including the famous hospital, Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital.

SSM's CEO expressed her “deep concerns about the proposed Medicaid changes” in the Republican bill, stating that the Republican bill “threaten[s] coverage for millions of people and jeopardize[s] financial stability of safety net providers like SSM Health.” For what? For a tax cut for the wealthiest people in America?

Sixty percent of this tax cut goes to people making over \$400,000 a year and, at the highest levels, a \$346,000 annual cut in taxes for the richest people in America. So do we cut back on these hospitals?

In Missouri, 250,000 individuals are expected to lose coverage under the Republican plan, resulting in Missouri hospitals facing an increase of \$430 million in uncompensated care costs in a single year.

I know these numbers are numbing, so many of them are so big. But let's get down to the basic message. Hospitals that are hanging on—rural hospitals, hospitals in the inner city, children's hospitals—are the ones that are making it barely each and every year.

They are the ones who will lose replacement of funds by Medicaid under the Republican plan.

What would the cuts mean for rural hospitals in Missouri? Already, 10 rural hospitals are in jeopardy of closing. This Republican bill could be the final straw. I hear exactly the same message across the river in Illinois.

I heard this message from UnityPoint Health, which has hospitals in Illinois and in Iowa. They told me that Medicaid covers nearly 40 percent of the children born at their hospital, and they rely on provider taxes to offer maternal, emergency, and behavioral health services. If Republicans have their way, these critical services are in jeopardy, and some will go away.

Todd Patterson, the CEO of Washington County Hospital in Iowa, said:

Medicaid is not a line item—it is a cornerstone. . . . When policymakers in Washington . . . slash Medicaid funding . . . they are turning off the oxygen for rural health care.

I will tell you, I grew up in Downstate Illinois, and I have represented them in Congress and in the Senate. These hospitals are critical to the economy in these communities. You take a hospital out of a community, and you have taken out a major employer and a major economic factor. Try to attract a new business and explain a hospital is 2 hours away. Try to keep a new business in town when the hospitals are going down.

Currently, 107,000 people in Iowa are projected to lose health insurance under this plan. It would increase annual uncompensated care costs for hospitals by nearly \$190 million.

Republicans in Iowa and Missouri get sick and rely on their hospitals, just like Democrats. My colleagues know these Medicaid cuts would be devastating, and no bandaid hospital grant fund that Republicans are frantically trying to create will make up for this seismic hole.

While President Trump said he would protect Medicaid, he is now pressuring Republicans to make deep cuts in the program. He is asking Republicans to choose billionaires over hard-working American families.

Now is the real test for Senate Republicans.

I can remember when it occurred during Trump's first term—another tax bill, another massive increase in the national debt. How were they ever going to pay for it? Well, there was a proposal that they would cut back on the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare. That cutback was hanging by one vote in the balance. I was sitting here at this chair and watched as John McCain came through those Senate doors at 2 o'clock in the morning. He was the deciding vote. John McCain walked to the well and gave a “no” and saved the Affordable Care Act from Trump's first term.

Now we are going through this scenario again—again—another Trump tax cut, more cuts when it comes to

medical care, particularly for families who are the most vulnerable.

Will anyone rise to the occasion as John McCain did?

We need four Republicans to stand up and say: Enough. Stop penalizing the families of America and the rural hospitals of America and the smalltown hospitals of America for a tax break for wealthy people. We are better than that in America. It is time. We need four Republicans with good sense to step up before it is too late.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1220

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, when I was in grade school, my dad, the mechanic, would point to the schoolhouse doors and say: Son, if you go through those doors and you work hard, you can do almost anything because we are so fortunate to live here in the United States.

He was a big fan of public schools giving an opportunity for every child to thrive. I took his advice to heart and went through those doors and studied hard and loved the vision of opportunity for every child in America.

But the fact is that many careers require more than a K-through-12 education, and the cost of college has exploded.

When I was graduating from high school, if you worked a summer job at minimum wage, which was about \$3 an hour, you could save enough money, living at home, to pay your tuition at any of the public universities in the State of Oregon. Well, try paying your tuition today, a year of tuition, based on minimum wage working the summer.

We are in a situation where college is so much more important now than it was decades ago to so many parts of our society, and yet it is so much more expensive. It is a huge barrier to opportunity for every child.

My children are 29 and 27. Not so long ago, they were in grade school in my neighborhood—my blue-collar neighborhood—and people would say to me: Jeff, I am not sure I should encourage my son or my daughter to go to college because I am afraid they are going to end up with a mountain of debt, and that debt is going to be a millstone around their neck—instead of creating opportunity, obstructing opportunity.

Indeed, we have seen the challenge in which, because of the cost of college, our sons and daughters are marrying later. Because of debt from college, our sons and daughters are finding it much more difficult to be able to buy a home, which has been the primary source of family wealth for middle-class Americans.

So we should do something about this. But, unfortunately, my Republican colleagues want to make college more expensive.

I wish you could come to my blue-collar community, get out of your gated communities where you live with

people affluent enough to just pay their son's and daughter's education, and understand how expensive college is as a barrier to opportunity here in the United States of America.

Specifically, they want to make it harder for children to afford college by eliminating income-driven repayment plans for borrowers. Income-driven repayment plans help folks responsibly pay off their student loans by basing a borrower's monthly payments on their income and their family size. It sounds like common sense to me.

One of these income-driven repayment plans is the Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE plan, which more than 8 million Americans are enrolled in. But in the reconciliation bill—the proposed bill that we will be voting on later this week—it is slashed, and Senate HELP Committee Republicans are attempting to slash these loans in their portion of the reconciliation bill as well.

As a result of these cuts, the Student Borrower Protection Center calculates that a typical borrower with a college degree will pay about \$250 more per month. Now, if you are coming from affluence, maybe you are like: \$250 a month. Oh, less than 10 bucks a day, not a problem.

But you know it is a massive problem for children across America, for our young adults across America, for our families who are not among those millionaires and billionaires who so often inhabit this Senate Chamber.

Why do Republicans want to get rid of programs that help individuals and working families, help lift them up and responsibly pay back what they owe and instead want working families to believe that perhaps college is not a possibility because of the mountain of debt it will create on their children?

It is a “families lose, billionaires win,” this attack on affordable ways to pay for college. It is another example of the “Big Beautiful Betrayal,” the way this reconciliation bill puts families down and helps the rich get richer.

Families lose, and billionaires win—that is not a good theme for America. It is not good policy. It is not even good politics. How about we work together on families thrive and billionaires pay their fair share?

I have introduced the Savings Opportunity and Affordable Repayment Act, or the SOAR Act, with Senator KAINE, with Leader SCHUMER, and with Senator SANDERS to codify and expand the SAVE plan and help borrowers in four important ways:

First, it will allow more low-income borrowers to qualify for income-driven repayment plans, increasing the number of students who will be able to responsibly pay back their loans.

Second, it protects borrowers from runaway interests.

Third, it incentivizes former students to keep paying their loans rather than default by shortening the timeline for loan forgiveness from a maximum of 25 years to 15 years.

CBO did a report on this back in 2020, and what they found is that those who participate in an income-driven repayment plan are half as likely to default as people who don't. So it becomes a win-win. More money gets paid back to the Treasury, not less.

Finally, it will help many more borrowers by making them eligible for these programs by including Parent PLUS borrowers and borrowers with Federal family education loans.

We know that the SAVE plan and other income-driven repayment plans work. They increase repayment rates; they reduce default rates; they lower costs for families; and they create a vision for our young folks that, yes, you can afford to go to college here in the United States of America; no, it won't create a mountain of debt that will be a millstone around your neck.

Don't we want to send that message of opportunity to all of our young folks so they can aspire to their dreams, so they can reach their highest potential, so they can return their success by helping their entire community and our entire Nation thrive? Yes, of course, we do.

So, colleagues on both sides of the aisle, let's join together in the vision of families thrive and billionaires pay their fair share, and let's do that by passing the SOAR Act.

So, Mr. President, I propose that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the SOAR Act. And to give you the precise technical language for that, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 1220 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, 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 (Mr. JUSTICE). Is there objection?

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise to object to S. 1220, a bill seeking to transfer the burden of \$230 billion in student debt to the 87 percent of Americans who chose not to go to college or already responsibly paid off their loans.

To be clear, this legislation does not differentiate between those trapped with overwhelming debt and those who could easily pay back their loans. If this bill is enacted, a majority of those who borrowed money to get a bachelor's degree would not have to pay back even the principal on their loans, and 91 percent of their student debt would be eligible for reduced payments. And it would be subsidized by everybody watching on C-SPAN right now.

There is no free lunch. These policies are as unfair as they are irresponsible. Where is the relief for the Louisiana truckdriver who took out a loan to buy a truck? What about the hard-working mom who paid off her student loans