

Senate advances Trump plan to gut social programs to benefit the super-rich

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The US Senate voted by a 51-49 margin Saturday night to open debate on the major legislative package of the Trump administrative, which will provide \$4 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy, cut \$1 trillion or more from Medicaid and food stamps and pump hundreds of billions of additional dollars into the immigration police and the US military.

The Senate bill directly manifests the further shift to the right in the Republican Party and the entire framework of capitalist politics in the United States, as Trump seeks to establish a presidential dictatorship, now rubber-stamped by the Supreme Court, in order to carry out a social counterrevolution against the working class.

Contrary to expectations set by the media and the Democratic Party, the ultra-right House version of the reconciliation bill, which passed by only one vote, has become even more draconian in its Senate version. The cuts in Medicaid have increased from \$800 billion to \$930 billion over 10 years. And the Senate version adopts a new method of calculating the impact on the deficit which conceals the cost of Trump's tax cuts for the rich.

Two Republicans, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, voted against opening debate, for opposite reasons. Paul wanted even bigger spending cuts, while Tillis objected to the impact of Medicaid cuts on rural hospitals in his state. Within 24 hours of casting this vote, facing a threat by Trump to back a primary challenger, Tillis announced he would not run for reelection next year.

A perfunctory debate ensued, with Democrats arguing against the bill that they are certain will pass the Senate. The bulk of the "debate" consisted of the clerk of the Senate reading out loud the entire text of the 900-page bill, an exercise in political theater forced by

Democratic Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

By Sunday evening, the Senate moved on to an equally arcane and lengthy process cynically titled the "Votearama," in which every senator is entitled to offer amendments which must receive an up-or-down vote, usually by roll call. The purpose of this exercise is to allow senators to posture as supporting popular proposals (which are invariably defeated) or create opportunities for future attack ads.

The Senate version that emerges from this process—having already undergone substantial modification by the Republican leadership—must go back to the House of Representatives for final passage. This is hardly assured, given the one-vote margin of passage of the first version.

Some Republican House members say they will now oppose passage because of the increased cuts to Medicaid. Sixteen House Republicans, most of whom voted for the reconciliation bill, sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader John Thune saying they would switch their votes if the Medicaid cuts were increased.

One such Republican, Don Bacon of Nebraska, has already announced that he will not run for reelection in his Omaha-based district next year. Democratic presidential candidates carried the district in 2020 and 2024, and Bacon has barely held on to his seat each time.

The declarations by Tillis and Bacon are expected to be followed by other departures by so-called "moderate" Republicans, who would be considered extremely right-wing in most other countries but are out of step with the fascistic direction of the Trump administration and the Republican Party.

The most right-wing faction of House Republicans, the House Freedom Caucus, has threatened to oppose the Senate bill because it raises the deficit by even more

than the House bill.

Significantly, at least four Republican senators have demanded and won support from the leadership for a proposal by Rick Scott of Florida to penalize states that expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Retiring Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the former Republican leader, expressed the brutality of the drive to cut vital healthcare spending. According to Punchbowl News, he told a closed-door Republican caucus meeting, “I know a lot of us are hearing from people back home about Medicaid. But they’ll get over it.”

Media coverage has focused almost entirely on divisions among Republicans over secondary issues, while downplaying the colossal impact that the cuts will have on large sections of the working class. More than 10 million recipients could lose their Medicaid coverage, largely through the imposition of work requirements for most low-income adults, unless they have children under 14 years old at home, and through vastly increased paperwork burdens.

Recipients will have to file documents establishing their eligibility every six months, rather than annually, and many will fail at this task, not because they are ineligible, but because of the obstacles of poverty, age, illness and lack of education. Other provisions would ban immigrants from receiving Medicaid and limit state taxes on Medicaid providers.

Similar methods will be employed to drive low-income families off the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the formal name of the food stamp program. The cuts are projected at more than \$200 billion over 10 years.

While various factions of the Republican Party jockey for position, the Democratic Party maintains its posture of silent acquiescence to the looting of the Treasury to benefit the super-rich and further impoverish working people. The Democrats have confined themselves to ritualistic speechmaking and have not called a single protest, let alone a mass demonstration in Washington, against the cuts.

They support cuts to social programs and are terrified of the mass turnout at the June 14 “No Kings” protests against Trump’s drive for dictatorship, attended by as many as 11 million people, and by the large vote cast in New York City’s mayoral primary for Zohran Mamdani, who won because he called himself a

democratic socialist and advocated limited social reforms.

Earlier this month, the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted with Republicans to kill an impeachment resolution over Trump’s illegal bombing of Iran.

The Democrats, as a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, are bitterly hostile to the mass upsurge against the Trump administration and its assault on democratic rights, which poses a challenge to the financial oligarchy that they too represent.



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