

Trump Rebuffs Senate G.O.P. and Backs House Budget Plan

Mr. Trump's call for "one big beautiful bill" came just hours after he gave conflicting directions to congressional Republicans on cuts to social safety net programs.

By Luke Broadwater
New York Times

President Trump on Wednesday endorsed House Republicans' proposal to move forward with one all-encompassing policy and tax cut plan, dismissing Senate Republicans' efforts to break up his agenda into smaller pieces more easily moved through the chamber.

On his website Truth Social, Mr. Trump said he favored the House approach and "one big beautiful bill" because it "implements my FULL America First Agenda, EVERYTHING, not just parts of it!"

He continued: "We need both Chambers to pass the House Budget."

The president's comments did little to end the monthslong debate on Capitol Hill about how best to roll out his sweeping legislative agenda, which includes enhanced border enforcement and a range of tax cuts.

Senate Republicans said they planned to continue with their tactic of advancing Mr. Trump's agenda in pieces — by first moving a border-enforcement bill — and expressed skepticism that House Republicans, who have been riven by bitter infighting, would be able to reconcile their differences to produce a final product.

"He's made it clear for a long time that he would prefer one big, beautiful bill, and we're fine with that too," Senator John Thune of South Dakota, the majority leader, said after Mr. Trump's post. "If the House can produce one big, beautiful bill, we're prepared to work with them to get that across the finish line. But we believe that the president also likes optionality."

Mr. Trump's announcement came just hours after he gave conflicting directions to congressional Republicans on how they should proceed with regards to cuts to social safety net programs.

In an appearance Tuesday evening on Fox News, Mr. Trump was adamant that there should be no cuts to Medicaid, the health care program for America's poor, or other entitlement programs.

“Social Security won’t be touched, other than this fraud or something we’re going to find,” he said. “It’s going to be strengthened, but won’t be touched. Medicare, Medicaid, none of that stuff is going to be touched.”

But by the next morning Mr. Trump was endorsing House Republicans’ budget bill, which has deep cuts to Medicaid on the table.

The apparent contradiction made one thing clear: The budget process is about to get increasingly messy.

“You have a lot of people who’ve been talking about fiscal responsibility and cutting spending forever, and then can’t point to anything they’re really comfortable doing,” said Maya MacGuineas, president of the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, which argues Congress needs to get serious about addressing the nation’s \$36 trillion debt.

“Reducing spending and raising taxes isn’t popular,” she said. “Neither is exercise and eating healthy. We’re making some really shortsighted decisions in terms of continuing to run up the debt.”

Republicans are trying to perform a tricky tightrope walk in their effort to extend Mr. Trump’s \$4 trillion in proposed tax cuts. But they want to do so without increasing American’s debt, [which has risen to record levels](#). To close the gap, they will need to find deep cuts elsewhere in the budget.

So far, House Republicans have been eyeing a range of changes to Medicaid, including to limit the amount the federal government pays to states, which could save the federal government hundreds of millions.

Democrats have sought to focus public attention on the fact that the plan opens the door to cuts to Medicaid, a program polling shows is widely popular.

“The math doesn’t add up and the only way he’s going to be able to do it is to go after Medicaid,” Senator Peter Welch, Democrat of Vermont, said Wednesday. “It’s really an appalling agenda.”

The House budget resolution lays out broad spending targets by committee, but doesn’t name specific cuts. The plan instructs the Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees Medicaid, to come up with at least \$880 billion in cuts. [A wish list circulated by the House Budget Committee](#) contained numerous options to reshape Medicaid, which covers 72 million poor and disabled Americans. Many of its proposals focus on different ways to make state governments pay more.

Mr. Trump has never been the model of consistency. He has taken contradictory positions on a wide range of issues, including abortion, the Affordable Care Act, state and local tax deductions and key provisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, to name a few.

But the issue of whether to make changes to Medicaid to free up money for tax cuts is particularly thorny.

Speaker Mike Johnson has endorsed adding work requirements to Medicaid and cutting down on waste, but he argued that position isn't inconsistent with the president's view. Those moves, however, are likely to save only a small fraction of the money needed.

"Medicaid has never been on the chopping block," Mr. Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, said at a recent news conference, adding: "If you eliminate fraud, waste, abuse in Medicaid, you've got a huge amount of money that you can spend on real priorities for the country."

He added: "If you add work requirements into Medicaid, it makes sense to people. It's common sense."