

US Senator Maria Cantwell

Budget Reconciliation Bill Floor Speech

June 29th, 2025

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Mr. President, I rise to ask my colleagues to turn down this legislation in front of us. To reject it, and instead work together on fiscal policy that would help us by growing our economy more successfully and not devastating [for] our constituents.

Before I start, I want to thank the presiding officer for speaking up about not selling public lands. I very much appreciate his voice in that debate, and critical that we were able to successfully get that out of this legislation.

I want to work across the aisle to talk about these policies so that we can move our country forward in a competitive fashion. But I'm afraid that what we have in front of us is not the answer to what will make America competitive, particularly at a time when we are putting tariffs on American imported products, when we are basically getting into a trade war, and when we are devastating what I think is the underpinning of the economy of today, that is an Information Age innovation economy, and here we are devastating all of our investments in NIH and NSF and in the competitiveness that we just implemented in the IRA and the CHIPS and Science Act that is making us the envy of countries around the world for innovation.

We do have great capital markets, and those capital markets help us innovate. And I think some of my colleagues think, well, we have a promise to families here to give them a tax break, and while many of us would support that, you're asking us also to give tax breaks to big corporations before they can get their tax break.

And that we don't like. We don't like it because it raises the cost on everybody, and that cost for middle class and lower income people will be devastating, particularly at a time when we continue with this tariff policy.

This bill would make the entire health care system less responsive and more expensive for everyone by dismantling Medicaid and shifting more of the cost burden onto states and threatening the very existence of rural hospitals.

This bill also sells spectrum out from under our national defense and safety agencies and forces states to choose between protecting their citizens from dangerous AI or providing broadband service.

And it just gives away big breaks to companies like Meta, that's Facebook, or Google, who I'm sure at this point in time don't really need that additional tax break.

Clearly, though, the most egregious and certainly most destructive part of this reconciliation is the changes to health care. The fact that 17 million people will be uninsured and raise the cost on everyone. This is from the Congressional Budget Office.

We don't need to be raising health care costs on our constituents. The CBO analysis revealed that hasty, negotiated updates by Republicans discussed behind closed doors early Saturday morning, added that \$130 billion in Medicaid cuts to the bill. That's a whopping \$930 billion in total Medicaid cuts.

That is how CBO got to this number of 17 million people. The challenge is, nobody marked up a bill in committee. Nobody even had a hearing where somebody presented this information. No, this is all being changed on a daily basis, and everybody's trying to catch up, but what we're really trying to do is fight for our constituents and make sure that we know the impacts.

The impacts of these 17 million people will be severe cuts felt in every corner of the United States. State governments will be the first to feel the tsunami of cuts, and unlike the federal government, they must balance their budget, so they can't borrow the money to make up for the deficit.

In our state, the State of Washington, our governor and legislators have to grapple with an estimated \$3 billion shortfall that this will bring to them as a result of this many people losing coverage.

[Friday], I held a virtual press conference with a group of Republican state representatives. A Republican Utah state representative, Ray Ward, who just also happens to be a physician, warned that these cuts will amount to \$1 billion budget deficit per year in his State of Utah.

That budget shortfall forces his state government to make some very difficult decisions. They have to decide whether to cut reimbursements to providers, cut medical services, cut more people off the rolls, or make drastic measures like increasing everyone's taxes.

Kevin Leonard and Steve Hobbs, one of them is the executive director of the Association of County Commissioners of North Carolina and the other a [former] Missouri representative, basically said, as county government leaders and state leaders, they are worried that this bill basically is an unfunded mandate on them.

Commissioner Hobbs said, where they will feel it most is that services like behavioral treatment will now have to be provided through the jails instead of a medical setting.

Our own Peninsula [Behavioral] Health expert, who was on the call, basically said that in their region of our state, this could be as much as a 25% to 45% cut in behavioral health.

So that's what happens when you cut people off of Medicaid. The amount of money, since \$1 in \$5 is a Medicaid dollar, you're going to take that much out of the system. These people do not

operate on wild, profitable margins, oftentimes barely breaking even, or in behavioral health, oftentimes losing money.

But I guarantee you, if instead of seeing this Medicaid population in a behavioral health setting, you think you're going to see them in the emergency room or a jail, it is going to cost us a lot more money. It's going to cost our state, our county, and the local region a lot more money.

Not only will this bill diminish their Medicaid revenues, but it will also increase the uncompensated care some are estimating to be \$42 billion. Our rural hospitals, our rural health care challenges will be devastating.

In Washington, over 300,000 people will lose health insurance. And these are people who were easily treatable. Conditions that if you treat them, chances are they will be dealt with. But now, if you don't treat them, they're going to go to the emergency room and they're going to raise costs on everyone.

These families depend on this care. Last week, I spoke on the floor about one of my constituents, Britton Winterrose talked about his daughter, Leda, a five-year-old girl who had a rare condition [where] she stop[s] breathing in her sleep if she doesn't have oxygen.

Mr. Winterrose talked about how, even though he had a very expensive platinum plan, it didn't cover her costs. And just by doing this Medicaid and covering their cost, basically they have saved her life, and they have enjoyed her, in the many years that they have given to them.

Why are we making the Winterroses sweat over whether their daughter is going to be able to keep Medicaid, about whether the whole system in their part of our state is going to be able to keep doing Medicaid?

Right now, people are estimating that 5.4 million people will get pushed into medical debt because of health care and the cuts in this bill, the total amount of medical debt that Americans will owe will increase by \$50 billion.

So, is it really worth it to take \$880 billion -- or whatever it is now -- \$930 billion out of Medicaid, so that you're actually increasing the personal debt of people, making counties basically have unsustainable budgets, or having state legislatures come back in to cover our costs. As one of these commissioners said, this is nothing more than cost shifting to the States. It's irresponsible.

According to the Center for American Progress, a 60-year-old couple, who will be in the Affordable Care market today, making \$85,000 a year, could see their annual premiums raise as much as \$15,400.

Why? Because when you have uncompensated care, and you basically kick people out of Medicaid and off of the Affordable Care Act, what you're going to do is raise premiums on all of us.

A low-income Medicare recipient also qualifying for Medicaid could see their costs go up as much as \$8,340. So, why are we doing this? And the out-of-pocket expenses, now, that a Medicaid person has to pay for, they could be paying as much as \$1,650.

You want to do that to give a tax break to Google and Facebook? That's why you're doing this? The tax break that you want to give them -- multinationals.

And I could just say for a minute about this, when the 2017 tax bill came along and everybody said, the corporate rate is too high. We need to have our companies be competitive around the world. I would have considered lowering that rate to something. In fact, my colleague, Senator Kaine from Virginia, proposed something. But we didn't accept that. Instead, they lowered it to a very low rate, and then said, this year, we'll smidge it back up. That means they'll increase it back up a little bit this year. That was their plan.

But somehow these multinational corporations have got to my colleagues on this side of the aisle and basically said, "Give us the same rate that we had in 2017." Now, the reason I didn't support that in 2017 is because it was kind of ludicrous. You were saying to companies like Microsoft, "We'll give you a tax break," I don't think they really needed that big of a tax break, "and but by the way, we're going to raise taxes on the people who work at Microsoft. We are going to raise, because of the salt deduction, we're going to raise your taxes."

So, literally, hundreds of thousands of people in my state paid higher taxes to do what? Give Microsoft a tax break, which they gave in dividends. Now, did that help our economy? Did that help really grow our economy? I'm pretty sure the innovation at Microsoft helped grow our economy! I'm pretty sure the people who hustled on AI helped grow our economy!

I'm sure the investments that we made at agencies across our federal government helped us meet the challenges that we are facing in innovation and competition from China, not that dividend. But now we're doubling up again. And how much is that multinational tax break? Over \$200 billion.

So literally, you could take half of that money and you could give it to Medicaid instead, and not cut Medicaid. Now let's see, tax breaks to Meta and Google or paying for Medicaid? Tax breaks for Facebook and Meta -- the same company now changing their name and Google -- or making sure there's enough revenue to pay for Medicaid?

This is ludicrous: the notion that we are continuing to make big corporations the priority when they knew this tax extension was not coming. And I'm pretty sure if you look at the numbers that you see from Facebook – Meta – and Google, you will see they don't really need a tax break. They're doing pretty well right now.

So the budget reconciliation bill really threatens our progress on health care, Now, let me explain what I mean by that. It's not enough to just say that this health care issue that we are really winning the day, when you look at what happened to us in health care, when

our whole goal of doing the Affordable Care Act was to basically get more people covered under insurance. Why? Because we wanted to lower all the costs on health care overall. We wanted health care costs to go down, and we wanted the cost of premiums and the cost to individuals to go down and to be more like the rate of inflation: 3% to 4%. That has been our goal forever. Forever!

And so, prior to the Affordable Care Act, rates on an annual basis -- think about this -- on an annual basis, your health care premiums, your health care costs, were generally rising about 5.4% a year. Okay. Who could keep up with that? Who could keep up with every year your health care costs continuing to rise?

And so, we did the Affordable Care Act, and guess what? We did get that into the rate of inflation. I think there's more we could have done. Lots of things happened in between, but we literally got it down to 3.7% and we did that by covering more people.

The audacity of my colleagues over here to now claim that Medicaid expenses got too expensive, when in reality, we made this choice to drive down these premium costs, so they were only rising close to inflation, and that was our goal, and we succeeded.

So, what are we doing now? Well, under the GOP plan, Wakely Healthcare Institute and the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities], these are numbers that come from them, the GOP plan will now go back to raising your premiums and your healthcare costs between 7% and 11% a year. A year!

Right? So, we're going to go blowing way past the 5.4%, we're going to go back here. And why? Because you're going to cut off millions of people from health care. You're going to increase the cost of uncompensated care. You're going to make people wait to go to emergency rooms, and then they're going to be sicker, and that's going to cost -- I don't know how much it costs, but it's definitely a multiple of five or more.

I don't know if it's -- what do you think it is, Kevin, an emergency room? 10. Okay, 10. He says 10. It's 10 times more expensive to deal with somebody at an emergency room than just get health insurance and get covered.

Okay, so now we want to know, why are we raising the cost on everybody's health insurance, including these plans because this side of the aisle basically wants to cut a bunch of people out of a system that lowered the cost of health care plans overall, and kept it more in the rate of inflation? Why? Why would you want to do this?

So, it makes no sense, and I hope our colleagues will think long and hard about that. I also think that you could still take the Google, Meta tax break for multinationals and pay for \$100 [billion] and cover the Medicaid.

You could take another \$100 [billion] from that big tax break, and you could pay for some of the energy tax credits that were so essential to combating the Chinese in what they are doing on the

clean energy front. The Chinese firms are doing everything they can to invest and undercut the United States in EV and battery technology. The US is responding aggressively to that. That's why we did the Inflation Reduction Act.

In fact, [because of] the Inflation Reduction Act, we basically enacted more than 2000 new clean energy industrial manufacturing [facilities], more than [980,000] private sector jobs, and more than 3.4 million Americans claimed clean energy tax credits that improve their efficiencies.

In fact, the Joint Economic Committee estimated that the typical household could save between \$460 and \$1,000 in annual energy costs thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act.

But what do we have now? We have President Trump and inflation. We have inflation because of multiple issues, consumers struggling to keep up amid higher prices, mounting debt and fiscal uncertainty. That's what we have.

And so, we're reversing the very tax credits that help lower the cost, and were going to help us be competitive against China, and help us succeed as a nation. And the one thing that I always think the United States is really great at, and that is innovation. I don't know if it just started with Ben Franklin or many other people along the way, but you give Americans the task, and they will do the job. If you give them the education, if you give them the R&D with a university partner, they will get the job done.

And so now, don't take my word for it. Take Mr. Musk's word for it: "The latest Senate draft bill [will destroy] millions of jobs in America and causes immense strategic harm to our country. Utterly insane, destructive. It gives handouts to the industries of the past while severely damaging the industries of the future."

Yeah, he said it best. But back to that chart. We were doing the energy because we wanted to diversify, but we also wanted to lower costs and we wanted to be competitive, right here it says the vehicle, vehicle, vehicle, okay? Natural gas, propane. Okay, that's why we were diversifying, because all those things are going up!

So, this bill is not going to help electricity. You're getting rid of the electricity tax credit. So again, instead of helping Meta and helping Google, you could be helping to lower the inflationary cost by making the investments in these tax credits.

But Mr. President, there's more in this bill that I don't like. My colleague from Texas is proposing an AI moratorium. He literally wants to stop states from regulating the rollout of autonomous vehicles like Texas Governor Greg Abbott, who signed a [law] last week to regulate how autonomous vehicles are licensed and deployed in Texas. And how do proponents of this moratorium propose to get started? By holding broadband money hostage unless you implement an AI moratorium.

Well, I know what the Heritage Foundation said. The Heritage Foundation said that "federal AI power grab could end state protection for kids and workers." Again, you are giving states a big

fat bill, and now you're trying to override laws that have been on the books for a long time, protecting consumers from fraud, from abuse and they are there to protect kids, and now you want to get rid of them. So it's no surprise that stakeholders on the right and left oppose this in the bill -- they include 17 Republican governors and 40 attorneys general -- both Democrats and Republicans, and other organizations ranging from the Heritage Foundation to the Center for American Progress. So anytime you can get the Center for American Progress and the Heritage Foundation on the same side of an issue, chances are you should be listening to what they have to say.

Mr. President, this letter, I would like to enter into the record from the National Association of Attorneys General. This bill would affect hundreds -- I'm quoting now from this letter -- quote, "this bill would affect hundreds of existing and pending state laws passed and considered by both Republican and Democratic state legislatures. Some existing laws have been on the books for many years." End quote. Okay, so these are attorneys general from a variety of states who basically know the laws on their books, and they're basically saying, Don't do this to us. Don't override our laws.

I'd also like to enter into the record, Mr. President, a letter from 17 Republican governors also against this provision. Their letter I'd like to read from is really about this point I was trying to make about fighting China. I mean, I thought we were here to be competitive against them, to basically beat them in a race on innovation, just like we did with CHIPS & Science to try to move for the future. But basically, their letter says, quote, "We fully recognize that AI is dominant in the next industrial competition between the United States and adversaries like Communist China. States have led anti communist China action banning Chinese-affiliated companies from owning farmland and property critical for infrastructure and military bases. But America should not sacrifice the health and safety and prosperity of its people in this fight. We must curb AI's worst excesses while also encouraging growth, which is exactly what states have done through their creation of their own regulatory framework." End quote. So they're basically saying the states are on the front lines of helping to protect on AI.

Now, Mr. President, I have no idea why the President of the United States has not protected the American people or the American military from the Chinese scams that are happening on Tiktok. We would never let China own ABC News and put out Chinese Communist propaganda on ABC News, but we let them do that on Tiktok. This body and our colleagues said, no, stop that and stop the Chinese. And yet we still haven't stopped the Chinese. So now here we are in this bill cutting out the states' abilities to fight Chinese AI companies like DeepSeek or Alibaba -- and they have no interest in stopping the scammers from using their AI products to harm Americans. They have none. And if you think we're going to pass something here -- I'm always ready to sign up to get legislation done -- but that isn't going to happen anytime soon. And so now you're telling these governors, these attorneys general, "yep, I'm not even going to let you fight China, because I'm going to take that tool away from you." So clearly, I don't support this part of the

legislation, and I appreciate my colleague from Tennessee and her attorney general working on this very important issue.

And finally, I come to the issue of spectrum. This is a very ill-conceived plan to auction off our precious spectrum. Such an auction will fundamentally compromise our defense capabilities, while endangering aviation and important federal capabilities like weather forecasting and scientific research. This bill would require an auction of 800 megahertz of spectrum critical to our military and civilian infrastructure. It would compromise military radio frequencies and weather and other spectrum issues, most importantly, drone operations. And I know the presiding officer knows how much drones are now at the epicenter and forefront of warfare and is reshaping the battlefields across the globe.

So why would we do this? Well, my colleague Senator Cruz is pushing for something that experts say would risk military operations. Last Congress, we got the Department of Defense and the Department of Commerce to agree that we should test bed the next generation of technology because we don't like interference.

Now, I'm sure most Americans sitting at home thinking, What is she talking about? Well, if you drive in a car and you have a radio station and all of a sudden the radio station doesn't get its signal or has some interference, you know that there is an issue. The tower -- not big enough, not strong enough -- this is the same. This radio spectrum has been used by [the] Department of Defense for secure purposes, very important secure purposes. Mr. President, think of the Chinese balloon, and the fact that we want to detect when a Chinese balloon is flying through our airspace. We want to be able to stop people from spying on the United States of America. And yet, instead of basically saying "we are going to look at this military spectrum and make sure that it continues to be secure," my colleague is suggesting to all of us that we sell that and basically allow, I believe, what is going to be a good amount of interference without solving this problem first.

Why does that bother me? Because I think we live in a world where you're going to see more and more spectrum, more and more warfare based on satellite and communication, and the landscape is changing. So I certainly don't want our military preparedness to be affected. Air Force leaders warned that spectrum bands are crucial to radar operations -- and I'm not going to go into more about why -- but...just like you can't have four radio stations basically interfering with each other, my colleagues want to allow the major telcos, mostly AT&T and Verizon, who are so hungry to sell more, whatever it is, \$79.99 plans or \$59.99 plans, they literally are going to give away national security just so they can sell more telephone plans.

In fact, I would ask them, "what have you done to clean up the last disaster that you had when the Chinese hacked you..." But these guys didn't do the work and now they're up here pushing our colleagues to say, give us more, give us more, give us more, without doing the homework required to figure out how to make sure our military is protected.

But what's even more infuriating is they want the same spectrum from our airlines as well. They want to cause confusion between the spectrum of aviation and in this telecommunication. Last time the Trump administration did this there was a major, major debate and the White House and the Biden administration had to come in and fix it. It's all related to the altimeter on a plane. Again, the presiding officer knows this well. An altimeter helps tell the plane what altitude they're at and what to do. But if you have interference with that altimeter... I am not for any interference with an aviation altimeter. I'm not for it.

But instead of figuring this out, working together -- both commercial and defense -- we're jamming into a bill the overriding of the defense interests and saying, "just give it to these two commercial bidders, maybe more, who then will basically just feel empowered to sell more of these [mobile phone] plans."

Mr. President, our competitiveness is too important. Our effectiveness is too important. Collaboration and working together to solve these problems is how the United States is going to succeed. Basically trying to pit each...against...the other in these kind of technology issues is not going to help us win.

So Mr. President, I've outlined many issues here, and I've outlined how you could fund Medicaid without basically doing what we are doing here. There is no reason, according to the Penn Wharton budget model and analysis, families in the first 40% of earners are, on average, projected to experience losses in after tax income and benefit transfers. In other words, Mr. President, yes, extending the 2017 tax cuts does help some middle class families, and we would support that, but all the hits in other areas like health insurance mean they will actually lose money overall. The lowest 20% of income brackets are hit even harder. So in this massive bill, it is those who can least afford it who are going to be hit the hardest.

We don't need the Trump inflation. We need to protect health care. We need to make progress in America's competitiveness. But this is not the answer, and I encourage my colleagues to vote against it. I thank the president. I yield the floor.