

# Conservatives slam GOP proposal to automatically raise taxes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservative groups and lawmakers are lining up against a proposal by Senate Republicans to impose automatic tax increases on millions of Americans — if their sweeping tax package doesn’t grow the economy and raise tax revenues as much as projected.

The opposition comes as the tax package cleared a key procedural vote in the Senate on Wednesday. The Senate voted 52-48 to start debating the bill. Wednesday’s vote potentially could pave the way for the Senate to pass the package later this week. The Senate could start voting on amendments Thursday evening.

Opposition to the tax “trigger” could doom a delicately negotiated proposal aimed at mollifying deficit hawks who worry that tax cuts for businesses and individuals could add trillions to the mounting national debt.

Tucking a potential tax increase into the tax cut bill isn’t sitting well with conservatives.

“Automatic tax increases are a special level of insanity,” said Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz. “I don’t think it survives.”

Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, called the proposal “a uniquely bad idea,” especially if revenues fall short because of an unforeseen economic slowdown.

Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., said the threat of an automatic increase would make businesses reluctant to invest.

“If businesses or individuals have no ability to plan on a rate, it makes an investment decision, for instance, very, very difficult,” Sanford said.

The proposal is being pushed by Republican Sens. Bob Corker of Tennessee, James Lankford of Oklahoma and Jeff Flake of Arizona. It is



President Donald Trump, center, walks with Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., left, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., right, as he arrives on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday.

picking up steam in the GOP-controlled Senate, even if it could land with a thud in the GOP-controlled House.

Corker said he has received assurances from Republican Senate leaders and the White House that some sort of “trigger” would be added to the Senate package that would increase taxes if the economy doesn’t grow — and tax revenues don’t increase — as much as projected.

“While we are still working to finalize the details, I am encouraged by our discussions,” Corker said.

Senators are also considering a companion proposal from Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, that would automatically cut taxes further if the economy grows faster than expected.

The overall package is a blend of generous tax cuts for businesses and more modest tax cuts for families and individuals. It would mark the first time

in 31 years that Congress has overhauled the tax code, making it the biggest legislative achievement of President Donald Trump’s first year in office.

An estimate by congressional analysts says the Senate tax bill would add \$1.4 trillion to the budget deficit over the next decade. GOP leaders dispute the projection, saying tax cuts will spur economic growth, reducing the hit on the deficit.

Many economists disagree with those projections. The trigger would be a way for senators to test their economic assumptions, with real consequences if they are wrong.

A number of conservative groups that are usually allied with Republicans are slamming the idea.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce issued a statement calling the trigger “impractical, unreasonable, and unnecessary.”

# Trump tweet stokes anti-Muslim sentiment; censured here and abroad

By CATHERINE LUCEY and JILL LAWLESS  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Stoking the same anti-Islam sentiments he fanned on the campaign trail, President Donald Trump on Wednesday retweeted a string of inflammatory videos from a fringe British political group purporting to show violence being committed by Muslims.

The tweets drew a sharp condemnation from British Prime Minister Theresa May’s office, which said it was “wrong for the president to have done this.” May spokesman James Slack said the far-right Britain First group seeks to divide through its use of “hateful narratives which peddle lies and stoke tensions.”

Trump turned away from taxes, North Korea and other issues facing his administration to share the three videos tweeted by Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of the British group. It was not clear what drew him to the videos, though one had been shared by conservative commentator Ann Coulter the day before.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Trump was simply promoting border security and suggested that verifying the content was not a top concern.

“Whether it’s a real video, the threat is real and that is what the president is talking about,” she said.

The tweets read: “VIDEO: Islamist mob pushes teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!” and “VIDEO: Muslim Destroys a Statue of Virgin Mary!” and “VIDEO: Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!”

Trump made anti-Muslim comments one hallmark of his presidential campaign and has previously retweeted inflammatory posts from controversial Twitter accounts including some with apparent ties to white nationalist groups. As president, he has sought to ban travel to the U.S. from a number of majority-Muslim countries.

Britain First opposes what it calls the “Islamization” of Britain. It has run candidates in local and national elections, with little success, and has campaigned against the construction and expansion of mosques.

Trump’s retweets gave a wide platform to the previously obscure group. The videos were each shared



President Donald Trump walks to board Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House, Wednesday in Washington.

## Videos misrepresent what happened

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like much other propaganda, the anti-Muslim videos spread around by President Donald Trump mix grains of truth, fakery and shades in between, overlaid with a message meant to be a blunt hammer blow for a cause.

Trump’s penchant for sharing doctored images and making false statements on Twitter means that content tweeted or retweeted by the president should be viewed skeptically. His spokeswoman, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, suggested the veracity of the videos wasn’t a high priority amid concern over national security and strong borders, saying: “Whether it’s a real video, the threat is real and that is what the president is talking about.”

Here’s a look at known facts behind the videos tweeted by a far-right British fringe group and retweeted by President Trump:

**FALSE:** One video shows a young man attacking another who is on crutches, near a river bank. It was originally posted to a Dutch viral video site in May and picked up by Dutch media. In her tweet, Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of Britain First, wrote: “VIDEO: Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!” But the victim was not attacked by a Muslim migrant.

“Facts do matter,” the Dutch Embassy in Washington said in a tweet directed at Trump. “The perpetrator of the violent act in this video was born and raised in the Netherlands. He received and completed his sentence under Dutch law.”

**APPARENTLY TRUE:** One video shows a man, said to be a supporter of Syria’s al-Qaida affiliate then known as the Nusra Front, smashing a statue of the Virgin Mary. The Middle East Media Research Institute identified the man as Sheikk Omar Raghba. In the video, he declares that “idols” will no longer be worshipped in the Levant before he smashes the statue, half his size, in the Yakubiya village in northwestern Syria.

The circumstances are not verified, but the images ring true. It’s well known that Islamic extremists target people and objects of other faiths — Christians, Jews, Muslims of other sects and movements — as well as indiscriminate populations. Also well known: Anti-Muslim extremists in the U.S. and other countries of the West have torched mosques. The video appeared online in 2013.

more than 10,000 times, and Fransen picked up nearly 10,000 Twitter followers in the hours following Trump’s retweets. She thanked him on Twitter, saying “GOD

BLESS YOU TRUMP!”

Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke also welcomed the videos, tweeting that Trump was being “condemned for

showing us what the fake news media WON’T. Thank God for Trump! That’s why we love him!”

Condemnation from civil rights organizations was swift.

The executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Nihad Awad, said in a statement that Trump is “clearly telling members of his base that they should hate Islam and Muslims.”

The American Civil Liberties Union, in a tweet, said, “Trump’s prejudice against Muslims reveals itself at every turn — with today’s tweets meant to gin up fear and bias.”

There are about 3.45 million Muslims in the United States, according to an August report from the Pew Research Center.

One of the retweeted videos from 2013 showed a radical Islamist in Egypt throwing a 9-year-old boy off a roof. The video was filmed in Egypt days after the overthrow of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi by Egypt’s military. The perpetrators of the roof violence were later sentenced to death for killing the boy and another man.

Another video shows a man — said to be a supporter of Syria’s al-Qaida affiliate then known as the Nusra Front — smashing a blue and white statue of the Virgin Mary. The video appeared on the internet in October 2013, in the midst of the Syrian civil war, and was reported by the Middle East Media Research Institute, MEMRI.

The third video shows one young man attacking another young man on crutches. It was originally posted to a Dutch video site in May 2017 and picked up by Dutch media the following day. Two 16-year-old boys were arrested, according to *De Telegraaf*, and police removed the video. The boys’ religion was not included in any of the reports.

Fransen said in her tweet that a “Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!” But a statement from a spokesman for the Dutch prosecution service Wednesday said the boy was not a migrant and was born and raised in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands Embassy in the United States also weighed in with a tweet, writing: “Facts do matter. The perpetrator of the violent act in this video was born and raised in the Netherlands. He received and completed his sentence under Dutch law.”

## BRIEFLY

### Nevada rancher refuses judge’s offer of release during trial

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A Nevada rancher and states’ rights figure refused a federal judge’s offer to be free on house arrest during his trial with two sons on charges in an armed standoff with government agents that stopped a cattle round-up in 2014.

The 71-year-old rancher, Cliven Bundy, declined Wednesday to be freed while others are still in jail awaiting trial in the case.

U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro said Ammon Bundy and co-defendant Ryan Payne can be freed Thursday to home detention.

The judge also said another Bundy son, Ryan Bundy, can now split time between home and a halfway house while serving as his own attorney in the case.

The decision involving the four defendants came amid questions about whether federal prosecutors in Las Vegas have turned over complete evidence records to defense lawyers.



Cliven Bundy

### U.S. economy expanded at brisk 3.3 pct. pace in third quarter

WASHINGTON (AP) — Led by a rise in business investment, the U.S. economy grew at an annual pace of 3.3 percent from July through September, its fastest rate in three years.

The Commerce Department estimated Wednesday that third-quarter growth exceeded the 3 percent annual expansion for the period that it had initially reported last month.

The performance, achieved despite damage from two devastating hurricanes, marked the fastest expansion in gross domestic product — the broadest gauge of economic output — since a 5.2 percent annual spurt in the third quarter of 2014.

The estimated growth for the July-September quarter marked an improvement on 3.1 annual growth in the second quarter and a 1.2 annual pace in the January-March quarter.

“The news on the economy had previously been good, but it just got a little better,” said Jim Baird, chief investment officer at Plante Moran Financial Advisors.

Baird noted that the holiday shopping season appears to be off to a strong start, “which bodes well for consumer spending to propel the economy to a strong finish to the year.”

Before the revised third-quarter numbers came out, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta was forecasting that growth would rise to a 3.4 percent annual pace in the final three months of 2017, which could bring growth for the full year close to 2.8 percent. In 2016, the economy grew just 1.5 percent.

### Trump threatens major sanctions after latest N. Korea missile

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration threatened new sanctions on North Korea on Wednesday after the reclusive government shattered 2½ months of relative quiet with its most powerful weapon test yet, an intercontinental ballistic missile that some observers believe could reach Washington and the entire U.S. Eastern Seaboard.

President Donald Trump tweeted that he spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping about Pyongyang’s “provocative actions,” and he vowed that “additional major sanctions will be imposed on North Korea today. This situation will be handled!” Trump’s top diplomat, Rex Tillerson, said the U.S. could target financial institutions doing business with the North.

The U.N. Security Council, meanwhile, was due to hold an emergency meeting Wednesday.

The fresh deliberations about new forms of punishment for North Korea came after its government said it successfully fired a “significantly more” powerful, nuclear-capable ICBM it called the Hwasong-15. Outside governments and analysts concurred the North had made a jump in missile capability.

### AP source: Mueller’s team questioned Kushner about Flynn

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner has been questioned by special counsel Robert Mueller’s team of investigators about former national security adviser Michael Flynn, a person familiar with the investigation confirmed Wednesday to The Associated Press.

The person said the questioning of Kushner earlier this month took about 90 minutes or less and was aimed in part at establishing whether Kushner had any information on Flynn that might be exculpatory. The person said multiple White House witnesses have been asked about their knowledge of Flynn, who was forced to resign from the White House in February after officials concluded he had misled them about his contacts with the Russian ambassador.

The confirmation of Kushner’s interview came as prosecutors working for Mueller postponed grand jury testimony related to Flynn’s private business dealings.

The reason for the postponement was not immediately clear, but it comes one week after attorneys for Flynn alerted Trump’s legal team that they could no longer share information about the case. That discussion between lawyers was widely seen as a possible indication that Flynn was moving to cooperate with Mueller’s investigation or attempting to negotiate a deal for himself.

### Lawyer: Conyers has no plan to resign amid harassment claims

DETROIT (AP) — Embattled U.S. Rep. John Conyers has no plans to resign amid allegations that the congressman sexually harassed several women when they worked on his staff, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Detroit-area attorney Arnold Reed told The Associated Press that the 88-year-old Conyers is going to fight claims that he inappropriately touched the women and that anyone making the allegations should be prepared to back them up.

Reed said Conyers is “innocent and will cooperate with any investigation that ensues.”

“He’s going to fight these allegations tooth and nail if he has to with evidence, with documentation, witnesses, whatever he has to do,” Reed said. “And the accusers will have to prove up their case.”

Last week, BuzzFeed News reported that Conyers had settled a complaint in 2015 from a woman on his staff who alleged she was fired because she rejected his sexual advances.

BuzzFeed reported that Conyers’ office paid the woman more than \$27,000 in the confidential settlement.