

Senate weighs scaling back tax package to win deficit hawks

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans weighed scaling back the tax cuts in their massive package to secure crucial support as congressional analysts said Thursday the legislation would add \$1 trillion to the nation's debt over the next decade.

Republicans were making major changes to the bill up to the last minute, including one that would roll back some of the tax cuts after six years to appease deficit hawks. The first revamp of the tax code in three decades — a top political priority of President Donald Trump — would affect nearly every American and business.

The scramble to alter the bill came after senators said the chamber's parliamentarian had ruled that automatic "triggers" designed to guard against big deficits would violate Senate rules. GOP leaders' main concern was winning over lawmakers, including Sens. Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona, concerned about adding more red ink to the deficit.

GOP leaders also were struggling to placate Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, who wanted an increase in the deduction for business income.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., had expressed confidence early in the day, but he has little margin for error with a 52-48 majority. He can afford to lose two votes.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said the bill will have "alternative, frankly, tax increases we don't want



With reporters looking for updates, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a member of the Senate Budget Committee, heads to the chamber to vote on amendments as the Republican leadership works to craft their sweeping tax bill, on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday.

AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

to do" to deal with deficit concerns. Flake said the tax increases would raise about \$350 billion over 10 years, though he didn't specify which taxes would go up.

Forced to rewrite the bill behind closed doors, Republican hopes of passing the bill late Thursday slipped to Friday.

In a dramatic turn, Democrats forced a vote on whether to return the measure to the Senate Finance Committee so it could be rewritten to ensure smaller deficits. They nearly prevailed in derailing the

measure as Corker, Flake and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin held out for just over an hour, repeatedly cajoled by their colleagues. They eventually joined fellow Republicans to scuttle the Democratic proposal.

Corker has been pushing to add automatic tax increases in future years if the package doesn't raise as much revenue as projected.

With the provision seemingly dead, Corker said senators would change the bill to roll back some of the tax cuts in future years, regardless of whether tax revenues

meet expectations. Flake said the tax increases would take affect after six years.

The overall legislation would slash the corporate tax rate, offer more modest cuts for families and individuals and eliminate several popular deductions.

Lawmakers will then try to reconcile the Senate bill with one passed by the House in the hope of delivering a major legislative accomplishment to Trump by Christmas. Republicans have cast passage of a tax overhaul as a polit-

ical imperative to ensure they hold their House and Senate majorities in next year's midterm elections.

A new analysis by the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation found that the bill would add \$1 trillion to the deficit.

The tax bill would increase economic growth, generating an additional \$458 billion in tax revenue, according to the analysis. That's far short of the \$2 trillion promised by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Two Republican senators, John McCain of Arizona and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, announced their support for the tax package Thursday, giving it a major boost. Both McCain and Murkowski had voted against the GOP bill to dismantle the Obama health care law this past summer.

Senators were still grappling with several issues Thursday, including a provision to add a deduction for local property taxes.

The current Senate bill completely eliminates the federal deduction for state and local taxes, a popular deduction in the Democratic-leaning states of New York, New Jersey, California and Illinois as well as many wealthy suburbs nationwide.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, proposed an amendment to let homeowners deduct up to \$10,000 in local property taxes on their federal returns. It is similar to a provision in the House-passed bill.

Without the deduction, Collins said, it would be "very problematic for me" to vote for the bill.

BRIEFLY

Oregon refuge standoff figure free on house arrest in Nevada

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A rancher's son at the center of an armed standoff with government agents near his family ranch in Nevada in 2014 and a takeover of an Oregon wildlife refuge in 2016 was released Thursday from federal custody in Las Vegas.

Ammon Bundy, 42, was greeted by his wife and six children while friends cheered as he walked out of the federal courthouse.

His first words after 22 months behind bars were about family and

American freedoms and his reasons for opposing federal power.

"It's about people, and life, and trying to do the best we can to promote and benefit the enjoyment of life," he said. "That's all we've tried to do."

Bundy's brief comments to reporters quickly shifted to the surprising order on Wednesday by Chief U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro to release him, his father, Cliven Bundy, and a co-defendant from jail to house arrest with friends during their ongoing trial on charges in the armed standoff that stopped a federal roundup of Bundy cattle from public land.

Navarro didn't specify why she

reversed previous detention rulings. Her decision followed a four-hour, closed hearing amid questions from defense teams about whether federal prosecutors have turned over complete evidence records, and about the conduct of FBI and other government agents.

Trump weighs plan to oust Tillerson, put CIA's boss at State

WASHINGTON (AP) — After months of clashes on policy and personality, President Donald Trump is considering ousting Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and

replacing him with hard-nosed CIA Director Mike Pompeo following less than a year on the job, senior U.S. officials said Thursday as turmoil within Trump's national security team burst into the open.

The White House plan, which Trump has not yet signed off on, would force a major realignment early in his term, also creating a vacancy atop the CIA that officials said could be filled by Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas. The overhaul could produce a significant shift in both the tone and direction of the president's foreign policy, removing it from the understated former oil man whose style has never fit well with Trump's.

It is exceedingly rare for a secretary of state, America's face on the global stage, to be fired or to serve for a year or less. Nor is it common for presidents to have such a significant Cabinet revamp so soon after taking office. Too much churn could fuel the perception of chaos in the Trump White House — perhaps one reason he has yet to pull the trigger.

Tillerson's likely ouster, which was first reported by the New York Times, loomed awkwardly over an Oval Office meeting Thursday. Asked whether he wanted Tillerson to stay on the job, Trump was coy, merely pointing out that Tillerson was in fact in the building.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON & EVENING

Table with 24 columns for time slots (12 PM to 11:30 PM) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.) listing programs.

DECEMBER 1, 2017

FRIDAY LATE NIGHT & SATURDAY MORNING

Table with 24 columns for time slots (12 AM to 11:30 AM) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.) listing programs.