

LOCAL & NATION

DISPUTE

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Even after a round of golf with the president on Saturday, Sen. Rand Paul voted against starting debate on the bill and on Tuesday against the bill itself, which required a tiebreaking vote by Vice President JD Vance to squeak out of the Republican-controlled Senate.

In a Republican Party that has fallen in lockstep behind Trump and a state that Trump has easily carried three times, Paul and Massie face political risks by getting on the wrong side of Trump and his MAGA base.

Political observers in Kentucky say the two may get away with it, however, because they are coming from Trump's right on questions of government spending and fiscal responsibility and because they are viewed as acting on principle.

Sen. Rand Paul Paul voted against President Trump's domestic policy package Tuesday after a marathon Senate session. Before that he was the sole GOP co-sponsor of an April 30 resolution to terminate Trump's tariffs. (Photo by Anna MoneyMaker/Getty Images)

Stephen Voss, a political science professor at the University of Kentucky, said Paul, Massie and Musk "have been motivated by a right-leaning libertarianism that shows up in their politics regularly."

"It's a matter of principle that separates them from other Republicans and having Republican President Donald Trump dive so thoroughly into a big government, strong presidency, model of leadership cuts against the principles of all three of those men."

Massie, an MIT-educated engineer who served as Lewis County judge-executive, was elected to Congress in 2012. His 4th Congressional District

stretches from Ashland in the Appalachian hills westward along the Ohio River to the conservative suburbs of Northern Kentucky and Louisville.

Trump's political operation has \$500 million ready to bolster — or punish — Republicans heading into midterm elections. A Trump-affiliated political action committee, MAGA Kentucky, launched a \$1 million ad buy against Massie last week, Axios reports. Ahead of the ad buy, Trump took to Truth Social to say Massie "is not MAGA, even though he likes to say he is" and vowed to campaign in Kentucky for "a wonderful American Patriot" candidate against the congressman.

Trump's candidate has yet to emerge, but first-term Republican state Sen. Aaron Reed of Shelby County has been mentioned as a possibility in some political circles.

MUSK TO MASSIE: 'YOU'RE AWESOME'

On Monday, Musk, who has been publicly feuding with the president over the GOP domestic policy bill, waded into the fray, saying on his social media platform X that he would support Massie. Moments before Musk had vowed that Republicans "who campaigned on reducing government spending and then immediately voted for the biggest debt increase in history" would "lose their primary next year if it is the last thing I do on this Earth."

The congressman welcomed Musk's support by sharing a Fox News article about the post Tuesday morning, to which Musk replied, "You're awesome."

Voss said it may become "a Trump versus Musk proxy war in Northern Kentucky," though both men have a tendency to "jump from controversy to controversy."

If attention on the primary blows over by next year, Massie could have

an easier time keeping his job, Voss said, but "he may have other ambitions than merely keeping his job."

"Thomas Massie has become a household name in a way few members of the House of Representatives get to be," Voss said. "The fame and notoriety he's getting might put his current seat in greater jeopardy, but it opens up lots of opportunities."

For Republicans hoping to position themselves as the future of their party, particularly if Trump's popularity with voters dwindles and the GOP takes losses in midterm elections, "being on the side of the GOP that resisted Trump can start to pay off."

"Right now, going against Trump is the kiss of death, but that may change," Voss said.

At least one Republican in Congress, North Carolina Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, said he won't seek reelection after voting against Trump's bill. Tillis' opposition stemmed from the bill's funding cuts which he said would force "painful decisions" about Medicaid and hurt his state.

In contrast, Massie and Paul objected to the bill because it will send federal deficits soaring.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a calculation Sunday showing the Senate version of the bill would add \$3.25 trillion to federal budget deficits over 10 years.

Tres Watson, a political consultant and former spokesperson for the Republican Party of Kentucky, said Massie's 2026 primary is "definitely going to be a fight" especially with Musk's interest in the race. Watson added that the endorsements of Trump and Musk might have less impact on the contest than the resources each could put behind a candidate.

Watson said Massie has a strong set of beliefs and he will vote for them "whether that puts him in very awkward positions with very awkward

bedfellows or not." As a fiscally conservative, libertarian Republican, "he's going to be against this bill."

Paul is similar to Massie but "occasionally will play ball a little bit more," Watson said. Paul and Trump likely developed rapport during the 2016 campaign, "whereas Massie has kind of always been a thorn in Trump's side dating back to the first administration."

Paul hasn't faced Trump's wrath like Massie has.

Musk's involvement could also mean the primary will be quite expensive. Groups affiliated with Musk spent nearly \$20 million backing a conservative candidate in the Wisconsin Supreme Court election earlier this year, according to media reports. Musk also gave the state Republican Party \$2 million. Despite all that, Musk's candidate lost.

Massie thanked Musk Tuesday from his campaign account on X, adding Musk's purchase of X, formerly Twitter, and making it the "platform for free speech has already helped my cause immensely," allowing the congressman to "bypass conventional media to refute the lies of both political parties and to provide transparency about how Congress works and what's actually inside of the bills we vote on."

Massie said opposing the megabill and the Iran strikes "recently earned me the ire of the swamp and a fight for my re-election," but the race is instead "a referendum on whether members of Congress can think and act independently based on what's best for the country, or whether all members of congress must be reduced to rubber stamps for their respective political parties and swampy special interests."

"I'm extremely thankful to have Elon Musk's financial assistance to continue my mission as an independent voice in Congress for my constituents," Massie wrote.



Shannon Gilday

MORGAN

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Originally scheduled for January, the hearing moved forward with the Commonwealth presenting witnesses to argue Gilday is competent to stand trial and, if convicted, remains eligible for the death penalty. The proceeding also marked the first public presentation of previously undisclosed evidence and offered a glimpse into the defense's legal strategy.

Morgan's family and friends were in attendance throughout the hearing.

"This is an important step toward accountability," said Mica Sims, a friend of Morgan. "We will be there every day, in person, to ensure we get Justice for Jordan."

Testimony from three mental health experts was central to the hearing. Two doctors called by the defense said Gilday had been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and exhibited symptoms in the months leading up to the killing. However, a third expert, testifying for the prosecution, disputed that diagnosis. He stated that Gilday's medical history showed only an anxiety disorder and found no evidence of psychosis before or during the incident.

The court will now weigh the testimony before deciding whether Gilday is mentally fit to face the death penalty. Attorneys are expected to submit written briefs by August 15. A status hearing has been scheduled for October 3 at 10 a.m.

Senate passes Trump's tax and spending cuts bill as Vance breaks a 50-50 tie

LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK AND MATT BROWN ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans hauled President Donald Trump's big tax breaks and spending cuts bill to passage Tuesday by the narrowest of margins, pushing past opposition from Democrats and their own GOP ranks after a turbulent overnight session.

The outcome capped an unusually tense weekend of work at the Capitol, the president's signature legislative priority teetering on the edge of approval or collapse. In the end that tally was 50-50, with Vice President JD Vance casting the tie-breaking vote.

Three Republican senators — Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Susan Collins of Maine and Rand Paul of Kentucky — joined all Democrats in voting against it.

"In the end we got the job done," Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota said afterward.

The difficulty for Republicans, who have the majority in Congress, to wrestle the bill to this point is not expected to let up. The package now goes back to the House, where Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana had warned senators not to overhaul what his chamber had already approved. But the Senate did make changes, particularly to Medicaid, risking more problems ahead. House GOP leaders scheduled a Wednesday vote and vowed to put it on Trump's desk by his July Fourth deadline, which is Friday.

It's a pivotal moment for the president and his party, as they have been consumed by the now 887-page "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," which was its formal title before Democrats filed an amendment to strip out the name. Republicans are investing their political capital in delivering

on their sweep of power in Washington.

Trump acknowledged it's "very complicated stuff" as he departed the White House for Florida.

"I don't want to go too crazy with cuts," he said. "I don't like cuts."

SENATORS WORK AROUND THE CLOCK

What started as a routine but laborious day of amendment voting, in a process called vote-a-rama, spiraled into an all-night slog as Republican leaders bought time to shore up support.

The droning roll calls in the chamber belied the frenzied action to steady the bill. Grim-faced scenes played out on and off the Senate floor, amid exhaustion.

Thune worked around the clock, desperately reaching for last-minute agreements between those in his party worried the bill's reductions to Medicaid will leave millions more people without care and his most conservative flank, which wanted even steeper cuts to hold down deficits ballooning with the tax cuts.

The GOP leaders had no room to spare. Thune could lose no more than three Republican senators, and two — Tillis, who warned that millions of people will lose access to Medicaid health care, and Paul, who opposes raising the

debt limit by \$5 trillion — had already indicated opposition.

Attention quickly turned to two other key senators, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Collins, who also raised concerns about health care cuts, as well as a loose coalition of four conservative GOP senators pushing for even steeper reductions.

Murkowski in particular became the subject of GOP leaders' attention, as they sat beside her for talks. Then all eyes were on Paul after he returned from a visit to Thune's office.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Republicans "are in shambles because they know the bill is so unpopular."

An analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found 11.8 million more Americans would become uninsured by 2034 if the bill became law. The CBO said the package would increase the deficit by nearly \$3.3 trillion over the decade.

Pressure built from all sides. Billionaire Elon Musk said anyone who voted for the package should "hang their head in shame" and warned he would campaign against them. But Trump had also lashed out against the GOP holdouts, including Tillis, who abruptly announced his own decision over the weekend not to seek reelection.



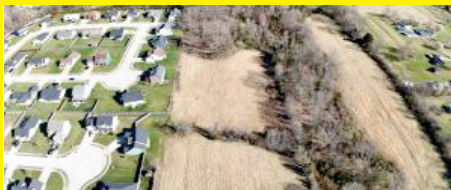
J. Scott Applewhite | Associated Press

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., rushes from the chamber to his office at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, July 1, 2025.

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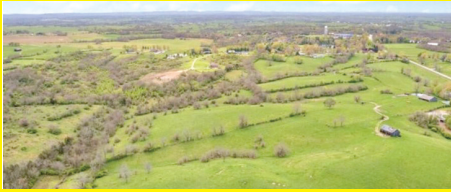
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