**As U.S. budget fight looms, Republicans flip their fiscal script**

1. **WASHINGTON (Reuters)** - The head of a conservative Republican faction in the U.S. Congress, who voted this month for a huge expansion of the national debt to pay for tax cuts, called himself a â€œfiscal conservativeâ€ on Sunday and urged budget restraint in 2018. In keeping with a sharp pivot under way among Republicans, U.S. Representative Mark Meadows, speaking on CBSâ€™ â€œFace the Nation,â€ drew a hard line on federal spending, which lawmakers are bracing to do battle over in January. When they return from the holidays on Wednesday, lawmakers will begin trying to pass a federal budget in a fight likely to be linked to other issues, such as immigration policy, even as the November congressional election campaigns approach in which Republicans will seek to keep control of Congress. President Donald Trump and his Republicans want a big budget increase in military spending, while Democrats also want proportional increases for non-defense â€œdiscretionaryâ€ spending on programs that support education, scientific research, infrastructure, public health and environmental protection. â€œThe (Trump) administration has already been willing to say: â€˜Weâ€™re going to increase non-defense discretionary spending ... by about 7 percent,â€™â€ Meadows, chairman of the small but influential House Freedom Caucus, said on the program. â€œNow, Democrats are saying thatâ€™s not enough, we need to give the government a pay raise of 10 to 11 percent. For a fiscal conservative, I donâ€™t see where the rationale is. ... Eventually you run out of other peopleâ€™s money,â€ he said. Meadows was among Republicans who voted in late December for their partyâ€™s debt-financed tax overhaul, which is expected to balloon the federal budget deficit and add about $1.5 trillion over 10 years to the $20 trillion national debt. â€œItâ€™s interesting to hear Mark talk about fiscal responsibility,â€ Democratic U.S. Representative Joseph Crowley said on CBS. Crowley said the Republican tax bill would require the United States to borrow $1.5 trillion, to be paid off by future generations, to finance tax cuts for corporations and the rich. â€œThis is one of the least ... fiscally responsible bills weâ€™ve ever seen passed in the history of the House of Representatives. I think weâ€™re going to be paying for this for many, many years to come,â€ Crowley said. Republicans insist the tax package, the biggest U.S. tax overhaul in more than 30 years, will boost the economy and job growth. House Speaker Paul Ryan, who also supported the tax bill, recently went further than Meadows, making clear in a radio interview that welfare or â€œentitlement reform,â€ as the party often calls it, would be a top Republican priority in 2018. In Republican parlance, â€œentitlementâ€ programs mean food stamps, housing assistance, Medicare and Medicaid health insurance for the elderly, poor and disabled, as well as other programs created by Washington to assist the needy. Democrats seized on Ryanâ€™s early December remarks, saying they showed Republicans would try to pay for their tax overhaul by seeking spending cuts for social programs. But the goals of House Republicans may have to take a back seat to the Senate, where the votes of some Democrats will be needed to approve a budget and prevent a government shutdown. Democrats will use their leverage in the Senate, which Republicans narrowly control, to defend both discretionary non-defense programs and social spending, while tackling the issue of the â€œDreamers,â€ people brought illegally to the country as children. Trump in September put a March 2018 expiration date on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, which protects the young immigrants from deportation and provides them with work permits. The president has said in recent Twitter messages he wants funding for his proposed Mexican border wall and other immigration law changes in exchange for agreeing to help the Dreamers. Representative Debbie Dingell told CBS she did not favor linking that issue to other policy objectives, such as wall funding. â€œWe need to do DACA clean,â€ she said. On Wednesday, Trump aides will meet with congressional leaders to discuss those issues. That will be followed by a weekend of strategy sessions for Trump and Republican leaders on Jan. 6 and 7, the White House said. Trump was also scheduled to meet on Sunday with Florida Republican Governor Rick Scott, who wants more emergency aid. The House has passed an $81 billion aid package after hurricanes in Florida, Texas and Puerto Rico, and wildfires in California. The package far exceeded the $44 billion requested by the Trump administration. The Senate has not yet voted on the aid.

**CNN CALLS IT: A Democrat Will Represent Alabama In The Senate For The First Time In 25 Years**

1. Alabama is a notoriously deep red state. It s a place where Democrats always think that we have zero chances of winning especially in statewide federal elections. However, that is just what happened on Tuesday night in the Special Election to replace Senator Jeff Sessions. Doug Jones, the Democratic Senate candidate who is known in the state for prosecuting the Ku Klux Klan members who bombed a church during the Civil Rights Movement and killed four little African American girls, will be the next Senator from Alabama. CNN has just called the race, as there seems no more GOP-leaning counties out there.To contrast, Roy Moore had been twice removed from the Alabama Supreme Court as Chief Justice for violating the law, and was also credibly accused of being a sexual predator toward teen girls. Despite all of that, though, the race was a nail biter, because Moore has a long history and a deep base in Alabama. Of course, decent people including Republicans were horrified at the idea of a man like Roy Moore going to the Senate. Despite the allegations of sexual predation, Moore also had said many incendiary things, such as putting forth the idea that Muslims shouldn t be allowed in Congress, that homosexuality should be illegal, and that America was great when slavery was legal. And that s just for starters, too.Thank you Alabama, for letting sanity prevail in this race. Oh, and a message to Democrats this is proof we can compete everywhere. Get a fifty state strategy going so we can blow the GOP outta the water in 2018.Featured image via Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

**Trump Said Some INSANELY Racist Stuff Inside The Oval Office, And Witnesses Back It Up**

1. **WEST PALM BEACH, Fla (Reuters) -** President Donald Trump said on Thursday he believes he will be fairly treated in a special counsel investigation into Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election, but said he did not know how long the probe would last. The federal investigation has hung over Trumpâ€™s White House since he took office almost a year ago, and some Trump allies have in recent weeks accused the team of Justice Department Special Counsel Robert Mueller of being biased against the Republican president. But in an interview with the New York Times, Trump appeared to shrug off concerns about the investigation, which was prompted by U.S. intelligence agenciesâ€™ conclusion that Russia tried to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton by hacking and releasing embarrassing emails and disseminating propaganda. â€œThereâ€™s been no collusion. But I think heâ€™s going to be fair,â€ Trump said in what the Times described as a 30-minute impromptu interview at his golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida. Mueller has charged four Trump associates in his investigation. Russia has denied interfering in the U.S. election. U.S. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said this month that he was not aware of any impropriety by Muellerâ€™s team. Trumpâ€™s lawyers have been saying for weeks that they had expected the Mueller investigation to wrap up quickly, possibly by the end of 2017. Mueller has not commented on how long it will last. Trump told the Times that he did not know how long the investigation would take. â€œTiming-wise, I canâ€™t tell you. I just donâ€™t know,â€ he said. Trump said he thought a prolonged probe â€œmakes the country look badâ€ but said it has energized his core supporters. â€œWhat itâ€™s done is, itâ€™s really angered the base and made the base stronger. My base is strong than itâ€™s ever been,â€ he said. The interview was a rare break in Trumpâ€™s Christmas vacation in Florida. He has golfed each day aside from Christmas Day, and mainly kept a low profile, apart from the occasional flurry of tweets. He spent one day golfing with Republican Senator David Perdue from Georgia, who has pushed legislation to cap immigration numbers, and had dinner on Thursday with Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, an international trade hawk. Trump told the Times he hoped to work with Democrats in the U.S. Congress on a spending plan to fix roads and other infrastructure, and on protections for a group of undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. Trump spoke about trade issues, saying he had backed off his hard line on Chinese trade practices in the hope that Beijing would do more to pressure North Korea to end its nuclear and missile testing program. He said he had been disappointed in the results. He also complained about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which his administration is attempting to renegotiate in talks with Mexico and Canada. Trump said Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had played down the importance of Canadian oil and lumber exports to the United States when looking at the balance of trade between the two countries. â€œIf I donâ€™t make the right deal, Iâ€™ll terminate NAFTA in two seconds. But weâ€™re doing pretty good,â€ Trump said.

**Trump Completely SCREWS The Middle East Peace Process, Just Another Wednesday For Him**

1. On Wednesday, Donald Trump took a step no previous president had ever dared to consider. He has declared that the United States now officially recognizes the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and announced plans to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city.The only problem is, the city isn t just holy to the country of Israel.While Trump indicated that he wasn t taking a position on any contested land, that s really a misleading statement, since declaring Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in effect gives the city to the Israelis, a position that essentially declares the debate on who all of the land belongs to over.Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator in the peace process, was quick to respond, saying that Trump had destroyed any possibility of peace and that he was pushing this region towards chaos [and] violence. Mustafa Marghouti, an independent Palestinian politician, told Al-Jazeera that: This is not a single act. This US administration that did not speak even once about a two-state solution. This American administration did not say or mention the words Palestinian state once. This American administration has failed to exercise any pressure on Israel on the issue of settlements, although Israel has enhanced settlement activities in the occupied territories by no less than 100 percent since President Trump was elected. Many expect to see outrage across the Middle East as news of the decision comes in.The European Union, for their part, insists that their position has not changed, and issued a statement almost immediately declaring that they intended to continue working toward recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of two distinct states Israel AND Palestine.Just as he does here at home, Trump seems to be uniting people against him, even some that seem to be unlikely pairings. Both the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and King Abdullah II of Jordan warned that ignoring the Palestinian, Muslim, and Christian rights in Jerusalem will only fuel further extremism and undermine the war against terrorism. But the decision does make Trump s evangelical supporters in America happy. Their desire to hasten the end of days has been a constant source of bafflement for those seeking to understand the strange relationship between the Jewish state and evangelicalism. According to Christian traditions, the Jews will all die in the Apocalypse, as will everyone who doesn t share their specific beliefs.No wonder they re mostly Republicans.Watch Trump s announcement here:Featured image via Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images