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# Republicans Say Debt Is Destroying America, But Their Budget Plan Could Balloon It

As DOGE takes the spotlight, Republicans backstage are planning to widen the federal budget deficit.

By Arthur Delaney and Igor Bobic

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WASHINGTON — The national debt has become a rallying cry for [Republicans](#) as they seek to dismantle the federal government, justifying the possibly illegal elimination of life-saving foreign aid,

consumer protections and cancer research at the hands of President [Donald Trump](#)'s administration and Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency.

"Our crippling national debt and massively growing interest on our debt will destroy us. Not destroy one political party or the other. It will destroy all of us together," Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) proclaimed at a congressional hearing on Wednesday.

After largely ignoring the debt and driving up deficits in his first administration, President Donald Trump is now unilaterally shuttering federal agencies and freezing spending approved by Congress in an effort spearheaded by Musk.

But the cost-cutting pursued by Musk and DOGE within the government — much of which has been challenged in court and could yet be reversed — is microscopic on the scale of Republicans' overall domestic policy agenda, the centerpiece of which is an extension of tax cuts that would add potentially trillions of dollars to annual budget deficits over the next decade, making the \$36 trillion national debt grow even bigger and faster.

Republicans insist their policies will propel the economy and boost federal tax receipts enough to cover the projected revenue lost due to tax cuts. A range of budget forecasters, from the [Congressional Budget Office](#) to the [Yale Budget Lab](#) to the conservative [Tax Foundation](#), have said that extending the tax cuts could indeed help the economy, but dismissed the idea they could pay for themselves.

While Greene's DOGE hearing was underway on Capitol Hill this week, Republicans on the House Budget Committee unveiled a budget blueprint calling for \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts and \$300 billion in new spending on defense and border security, with those figures

offset by just \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts. Overall, it would add an extra \$4 trillion to the federal budget deficit in 10 years.

“This is what happens every single time there’s a Republican in the White House,” Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-Pa.), the top Democrat on the committee, told HuffPost. “After spending years and years talking a good game on deficit and debt when there’s a Democrat in the White House ... when they’re in charge, they actually make the deficit and debt significantly higher than any Democratic president ever has.”



One Democratic senator called DOGE a "corruption scheme to pad Elon Musk's pockets." STEFANI REYNOLDS/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Adopting a budget resolution in the House and Senate is the first step Republicans must take to unlock a special “budget reconciliation” process allowing them to bypass a Democratic

filibuster in the Senate.

The House GOP outline calls for as much as \$880 billion in savings from Medicaid and as much as \$230 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, meaning significant cuts to programs that help tens of millions of Americans afford health care and food. The actual details of the cuts aren't spelled out; it would be up to the committees that oversee the relevant agencies to come up with specifics. Republicans will likely seek stricter eligibility rules for people who can't prove they're gainfully employed.

The budget also calls for a \$4 trillion hike to the government's borrowing limit — something Republicans in past years have used as leverage to try to extract spending cuts from Democrats because failing to raise the limit could cause the government to fail to pay its debts, potentially triggering a financial crisis. Trump has encouraged Republicans to deal with the debt limit as quickly as possible, and a \$4 trillion increase would likely be the largest in U.S. history.

One Republican on the House budget committee, Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.), said he believed the budget plan's cuts were too small — but he said he expected Musk to make up for it.

“Much of my disappointment in this resolution is compensated by the extraordinary work being done by Elon Musk and his team at DOGE,” McClintock said. “I am confident they are setting the stage for hundreds of billions of dollars of cost savings that are not reflected in this budget resolution, but that are real and imminent.”

McClintock also said he worried his colleagues' growth and revenue feedback assumptions were “far above the economic consensus,” but that the DOGE deregulatory onslaught would prove everyone wrong.

Rep. Ralph Norman (R-S.C.) praised the Musk-driven effort to shutter the U.S. Agency for International Development, saying, “We’ve got many more to come, like Social Security. We have many more to come, like the Department of Education. The American people are going to see where their tax dollars have been spent.”

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House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) [highlighted Norman’s remark on social media](#), saying Norman “made clear that House Republicans are coming for your Social Security benefits next.”

Norman told HuffPost that he believed Musk would uncover a large amount of “improper payments” made by the Social Security Administration. The Government Accountability Office, a spending watchdog that predates DOGE, [in 2023 identified more than \\$7 billion of improper payments](#) from the Social Security Administration under its retirement insurance and Supplemental Security Income program. Trump has repeatedly said he doesn’t want Republicans to touch Social Security or Medicare even though they are a huge part of federal spending.

Shutting USAID, if courts ultimately approve of the move, could save tens of billions annually. The agency oversaw \$40 billion in 2023, [according to the Congressional Research Service](#), though it’s likely some USAID functions would be continued by the State Department, which [absorbed the agency last week](#).

So far, DOGE’s purported savings do not come close to matching the amount of the tax cuts they aim to power — cuts that would clearly benefit Musk’s bottom line.

Republicans in the Senate, meanwhile, are working on their own bill to increase military and border spending while setting aside the tax

provisions that they plan to address later this year. House and Senate Republicans are not aligned when it comes to strategy or the level of cuts to programs needed to help offset the cost of their agenda.

“I would say whatever entitlement reforms they are baking in, it’s not going to be enough,” Sen. Todd Young (R-Ind.) told reporters on Thursday when asked about the House Republican budget plan. “They need to go more, more, more. Now is the time to be aggressive.”

For [Democrats](#), the gap between the tax cuts the GOP is pushing and the relatively minimal fiscal impact of DOGE so far is proof the effort is more about seizing power than about fixing the nation’s fiscal stance.

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“DOGE doesn’t seem to really be about saving money,” Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said. “I mean, ultimately the only way they get the numbers that they need to pass the massive billionaire and corporate tax cut is to cut services for regular people. You can’t get

the money they need to pad the pockets of their rich friends without coming after Medicaid or Medicare or schools or the Affordable Care Act or nutrition programs.”

“So, you know, I think DOGE is just a corruption scheme to pad Elon Musk’s pockets. I don’t think it’s about saving money,” he added.

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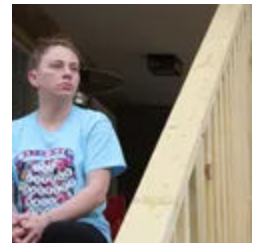
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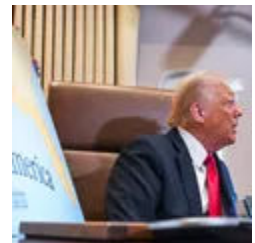
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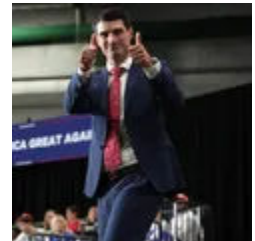


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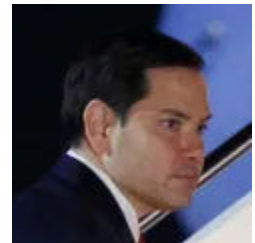
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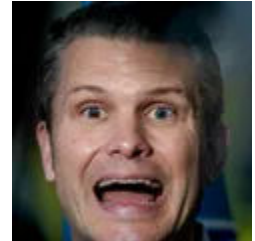


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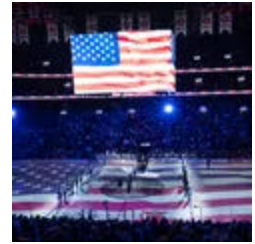
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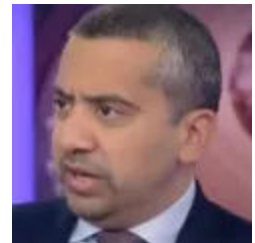
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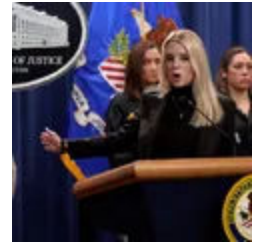


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