Opinion
Editorial
House budget agenda

The U.S. House of Representatives passed, 215-214, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act midnight May 22. The bill, which reflects President Donald Trump's plan for extensive tax cuts, would lead to big Medicaid and SNAP cuts. (OSV News/Reuters/Nathan Howard)

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May 28, 2025
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There is nothing beautiful about President Donald Trump's and the Republican House's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The House of Representatives has passed one of the most immoral pieces of legislation in recent memory. Giving this sweeping legislation a sophomoric title does not disguise its ugly nature. The vote took place after midnight on May 22, as most Americans slept, with a tally of 215 to 214, along party lines.

In reverse Robin Hood style, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act proposes nearly $4 trillion in tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest among us while cutting $1 trillion in vital support for the most vulnerable, including poor families with children and the elderly.

Over the last 40 years, we have witnessed successive waves of tax legislation supposedly aimed at broadening prosperity. However, in practice, they have done little more than widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Americans were told repeatedly that cutting rates for corporations and top earners would stimulate investment, spur job creation and raise wages. Instead, wages have stagnated, corporate profits have skyrocketed and inequality has deepened to levels not seen since the Gilded Age.

It is the kind of diabolical lie that only Trump's broligarch cronies could love.

> Jesus weeps over this cruelty. So do we.
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When President Ronald Reagan signed the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 into law, Americans were promised that benefits would "trickle down" to every corner of the economy. Yet, middle-class income growth remained frustratingly slow. By the end of the decade, the share of national income claimed by the middle class had begun its long decline from roughly 62% in 1970 to 42% in 2020.

Over that same period, the share going to the top 1% doubled, and the after-tax incomes of the richest 100th of 1% soared by more than 507% from 1979 to 2019. These were not unintended consequences; they were the anticipated result of political choices that sacrificed shared prosperity for the promise of individual gain.

Ironically, Trump's MAGA grift machine took advantage of these income disparities to propel him into the White House — twice.

In his first term, Congress enacted a significant overhaul of the U.S. tax code in late 2017. That legislation promised relief for working families and a boost to economic growth. It was another Trumpian canard, as corrupt as Trump University or Trump cryptocurrency. More than half its benefits flowed to the top 1% of taxpayers.

Corporations utilized a significant portion of their savings to fund record-high stock buybacks rather than increasing wages or investing in capital, contrary to what the proponents of the bill claimed to a largely unsuspecting audience.

That tax act gave a short-lived growth spurt but left us with bigger, lasting deficits. Brookings Institution experts called it "the wrong thing at the wrong time," rammed through with little debate and driven partly by politics.

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That brings us to the oxymoronic One Big Beautiful Bill Act. It is another fast-rolling disaster, only worse. Trump and House Republicans have passed a legislative package that seeks to permanently embed the most regressive features of the inequitable 2017 tax cut bill into the tax code while introducing a lucrative new payday for the wealthiest Americans.

To partially offset the cost of the tax cuts, the bill requires significant reductions that will inflict pain and suffering on the most vulnerable people in the country. Cuts to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, would shift hundreds of billions in health care expenses to states and families, impose strict new work requirements on able-bodied adults (including some parents) , and create bureaucratic hurdles that will push the most vulnerable individuals off the rolls.

Cleverly, the bill does not mention cuts to Medicare because they would be automatic. That's because it would add an estimated $2.3-3.8 trillion to the deficit over 10 years. And under the Pay-As-You-Go law, this extra debt would automatically trigger reductions of up to 4% a year to programs such as Medicare. That amounts to about $45 billion in 2026 and nearly $500 billion total through 2034.

Man holds sign: SNAP cuts are sinful.

A man holds a sign protesting cuts to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington May 7, 2018. (OSV News/Reuters/Joshua Roberts)

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So, the bill diverts funding from struggling families and environmental programs, cutting food assistance and Medicaid while decreasing clean-energy tax credits (just as climate-driven storms and wildfires become more intense.) It then redirects that money into larger Pentagon and border-security budgets.*

It is all disgraceful and shameful.

After this legislation hurtled through the House, we are counting on the U.S. Senate to bring an end to this great American nightmare. We urge the Senate to heed the voices of millions who will lose vital assistance under its provisions. We call on

senators to do their jobs, hold hearings, demand transparency, and amend or reject the provisions that substantially favor the wealthy few over the many. While even Republican senators may be tempted to cut taxes for their affluent patrons and slash benefits for the disenfranchised poor, we implore them to remember their fiscal roots and reject Trump's misguided proposal to explode the deficit, potentially sending the United States into a debt-driven death spiral.

The promise of American democracy is not merely the freedom to accumulate wealth. It is the promise of mutual obligation, of building a society in which our fortunes rise or fall together.

If we allow this One Big Shameful Bill to become law, we condemn ourselves to a future where opportunity is bartered away and our social contract is ripped to shreds.

Jesus weeps over this cruelty. So do we. We must reject this heartless bargain and instead pursue policies that honor the dignity of every citizen and the collective well-being of our nation.

* *Correction: This article has been edited to remove a paragraph that described a clause in the House of Representatives' proposed tax cut bill that "grants the president unprecedented authority over nonprofit organizations." The clause had been included in the bill, but was deleted by the time this editorial was published.*

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.