

Ideology Meet Reality

Republicans tend to be really bad operating in the real world

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At the top of the headlines this week is the very real opinion difference between President Trump and Elon Musk. Mr. Musk's principle concern is the lack of spending cuts that are present in the big beautiful bill:

"I was disappointed to see the massive spending bill, frankly, which increases the budget deficit, not just decrease it, and undermines the work that the DOGE team is doing," Musk said.

"I think a bill can be big, or it could be beautiful," Musk added. "But I don't know if it could be both." ([The Blaze](#))

Mr. Musk is right - and he is also terribly wrong. This dilemma is exemplary of the problems Republicans face throughout the party.

Terrific Bill / Horrible Bill

The "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act is first and foremost a tax reform bill. Its primary purpose is to set in stone the Trump Tax Cuts from his first term. To list just a few:

- Makes the 2017 Trump tax cuts permanent, preventing a scheduled tax increase for most Americans and maintaining lower individual and corporate tax rates.
- Expands the standard deduction for all filers, with an additional \$4,000 bonus for seniors, directly increasing after-tax income for millions of retirees.
- Exempts tips and overtime pay from federal income tax for workers earning under \$160,000, with no cap on overtime pay eligible for exemption.
- Expands and inflation-adjusts the Child Tax Credit, benefiting over 40 million families, and makes the credit partially refundable for adoptive families.
- Expands Health Savings Account (HSA) eligibility and contribution limits, including for Medicare-eligible individuals. ([Perplexity](#))

Republicans are following through on making tax cuts permanent. They are also exploring new ways to reassure all Americans that their hard earned money should stay with them. If nothing else, these tax cuts expose just how much and in what variety of ways the citizens of this country are being taxed. Tax bills act as sunlight, exposing the full waste and fraud to the cleansing power of public scrutiny.

But, it is also a horrible bill. As many conservatives have discussed, the bill does nothing to reduce spending, and does not address many of the issues that Republicans talked about during the campaign season:

- The bill's size and rushed process: Many conservatives object to the practice of passing massive, omnibus bills with little time for review, arguing this undermines transparency and regular order in Congress.
- Fiscal irresponsibility and deficit concerns: Critics like Rep. Thomas Massie and Sen. Rand Paul have called out the bill for expanding the debt ceiling and lacking meaningful spending restraint.
- Medicaid and SNAP (food stamp) cuts: The bill proposes deep cuts to Medicaid and SNAP benefits—up to \$1 trillion over a decade—which some conservatives believe do not go far enough. ([Perplexity](#))

Republican fiscal hawks align with Elon Musk on these points. The bill heralded by President Trump and most Republicans does not go far enough to reduce government spending.

It never could.

Government is not a business

Despite the hopes of many on the right, government is not a business - at least not in the traditional sense that we understand “business.” The main job of a business is to make a *profit*. How it goes about that task varies from one industry to another, but if a business does not make a profit, it ceases to be in business. Every outlay that a business makes is designed to increase income that matches or - hopefully - exceeds the amount spent on that expense. Employees are hired not to put people to work but instead out of a realization that the profits of the company will increase with that person’s presence. Products are rolled out or discontinued in response to the bottom line. A loss or a break-even is not the goal of business. Business is there to make a profit - or not be there at all.

Government’s function is to provide a *service*. From police forces to military forces, from garbage collection to immigration policy - the government’s job is to provide these services from taxes collected. They should do so as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, but they will always do it - hopefully - at a break-even status. If governments make a profit, they are collecting too much tax. If they do it at an overall loss, they are not being efficient.

In short, governments should ask two questions with every expenditure:

1. Is it necessary?
2. If it is necessary, how efficient can we be in providing this service?

Historically, we have never asked these questions - which has led to the oversized and bloated government that we have now.

The Third Question

There is a third question, however, that has become a major cornerstone of modern day representative government: Will it help or prevent me from getting re-elected.

In 2024, 95% of elected officials were [put back into office](#). How can that happen - especially when all polls show incredibly low [approval rates](#) of the job that Congress is doing? The answer: people hate Congress but love their local congressman:

While the level of confidence in Congress as an institution is low, Americans have a hard time applying the same level of accountability on their individual representatives for failing to pass legislation that has widespread public support. ([Quorum](#)).

If an elected representative brings home the bacon - whether it be government funding programs, jobs or entitlements - he or she can look forward to a long term in Congress. It is the reason why programs like medicare, social security, and other programs that make up the majority of our government spending are never addressed: they are election killers.

Ideology Takes Second Seat

That is the reality that Elon Musk and others refuse to face. The big cuts that he wants - that are in fact needed - to address the bloat and overspend that defines our government simply will not happen yet because the electorate do not want them to happen and will severely penalize the party who does. Every bloated program brings in a ballot for someone. Republicans in Congress know this and will make sure they protect the bills that bring them back into office.

With the narrow margins that Republicans have, ideology needs to take second seat to the very real problem of making sure the GOP can get re-elected to keep pushing conservative views. Republicans successfully threaded the needle on this bill. They managed to solidify tax cuts which was a major part of the campaigns of 2024. They also protected programs that will keep them in office.

Not The Time For The Big Hit

At some point, though, Republicans do need to put ideology in a prominent position and pass bills that will reduce spending. They need to tackle social security and other entitlement

programs that kill our budget. They must pop the bloat, and be willing to do so at the cost of their careers. In other words, Republicans must be willing to take "The Big Hit" in short term politics in order to save this country from itself. They must be willing to legislate to reform our government at the deepest levels - even if it means they will never cast another vote in elected office again.

The "One Big Beautiful Bill" Act has a lot to hate, but it is not time to take the Big Hit. This bill is all about Tax Reform and Tax Cuts. It is all about setting a framework for more reductions in the future. It would not pass without the spending that conservatives are worried about. It should not pass without the tax cuts that we need.

Republicans need to face this very simple fact: Every action takes place within the very real arena of political consequences. We might not like that fact - and at some point we need to change it - but we cannot deny its existence.

Welcome to reality.