



NATIONAL JOURNAL

# OUTLOOK: Johnson urges Senate: Go easy on our bill

**PLUS:** RFK Jr. halts COVID vaccine recommendation for pregnant women, children; 'Big Beautiful bill' would give \$1K to newborns; and senators want to bar 23andMe from selling data.



None

House Speaker Mike Johnson, with Senate Majority Leader John Thune (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

**Casey Wooten ,  
Emily Scaff and  
Amelia Monroe and  
Bella Timmerding**

🕒 May 27, 2025, 7:19 p.m.

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**H**ouse Republicans' work on a sweeping defense, immigration, and tax bill isn't over. Now they've got to protect it from a Senate eager to go its own way.

Republicans in the upper chamber have been saying for weeks that the multitrillion-dollar budget-reconciliation bill will undergo substantial changes when they get their hands on it. With the House [narrowly passing](#) [\(/s/728593/house-passed-megabill-to-meet-a-senate-buzzsaw/\)](#) its version of the bill last week, that time is now. If House leaders want a revised bill to make it through their chamber, they'll need to win over many of their colleagues on the other side of the Capitol.

In the early hours last Thursday morning after the House passed the measure, Speaker Mike Johnson noted that his effort to urge the Senate to take

a light touch to the bill had already started, as he had visited GOP senators at their weekly luncheon days before.

“I encouraged them to remember that we have a very delicate equilibrium that we have reached here,” Johnson [told](https://www.c-span.org/program/news-conference/house-republican-leaders-speak-to-reporters-after-budget-bill-passage/660296)

(<https://www.c-span.org/program/news-conference/house-republican-leaders-speak-to-reporters-after-budget-bill-passage/660296>).

reporters. “A lot of work went into this to find the right balance, and you all saw how perilous that was over the last week as it developed.”

Johnson can lose only three Republicans on party-line votes in his chamber.

GOP senators broadly like Johnson. It’s hard to find a member who will criticize the speaker, who has managed an unruly Republican conference with an exceptionally narrow majority. But that doesn’t mean they will heed the speaker’s pleas. Senators rarely do so.

Johnson hit three Sunday shows over the weekend to defend the legislation against criticism that it will add trillions of dollars to the national debt as

projections forecast—an issue for many budget-hawk senators. He also pleaded against the Senate making “too many modifications” to hard-fought deals on the state and local tax deduction and Medicaid cuts.

“We’re doing the best we can with the vote numbers that we have,” Johnson said on CNN’s *State of the Union* Sunday when asked about criticism from Republicans such as Sen. Ron Johnson that the measure doesn’t cut spending enough.

Speaker Johnson negotiated an increase in the cap on the state and local tax deduction from \$10,000 to \$40,000, which helped convince Republicans from high-tax states like New York and New Jersey to support the legislation. Senate Republicans, none of whom represent those states, are less supportive of the expensive provision.

Johnson also negotiated tougher requirements for Medicaid recipients, which brought hard-line conservatives over to support the bill. Some senators, such as centrist Sens. Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, as well as populist

conservative Sen. Josh Hawley, say they want to take an axe to the House's Medicaid cuts.

Significant changes to those provisions could upend the fragile balance Johnson built to pass the bill in the House.

The Senate has a long history of ignoring House leadership.

This upper chamber bucked Johnson in 2024, voting to dismiss articles of impeachment approved in the House against then-Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, largely before the chamber's trial even began. Republicans had wanted to remove President Biden's DHS secretary over his handling of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Looking back to the last major tax bill, then-Speaker Paul Ryan [urged](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/paul-ryan-faces-conservative-pressure-to-target-obamacare-mandate-in-tax-bill?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

([https://www.foxnews.com/politics/paul-ryan-faces-conservative-pressure-to-target-obamacare-mandate-in-tax-bill?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/paul-ryan-faces-conservative-pressure-to-target-obamacare-mandate-in-tax-bill?utm_source=chatgpt.com)).

Republican senators not to make major changes to that legislation, such as the addition of language repealing

Obamacare, to avoid complicating passage. That language didn't make it into the bill's final version.

And House Republicans may have another obstacle: President Trump, who [told](#)

(<https://x.com/EricLDaugh/status/1926764823712280658>), reporters Sunday that he was open to the Senate reshaping the bill.

"I want the Senate to make the changes they want, and we'll go back to the House and we'll see if we can get them," Trump said. "In some cases those changes may be something I agree with, to be honest. It happens."

—[Casey Wooten](#) (</search/?a=Casey%20Wooten>).



DAILY

### What could RFK Jr. do to vaccines?

While removing vaccines from the market would be considered legally questionable, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. could cause confusion and eventually impact markets if he is confirmed as HHS secretary.

ERIN DURKIN

(</s/726886>)

**RFK Jr. halts COVID-19 vaccination recommendation for pregnant women, healthy children**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will no longer recommend that healthy children and pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine as part of a routine immunization schedule.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced the change in a [video on X Thursday](https://x.com/seckennedy/status/1927368440811008138?s=46&t=kBbEX3mrEOJAU2F44vYIZQ).

(<https://x.com/seckennedy/status/1927368440811008138?s=46&t=kBbEX3mrEOJAU2F44vYIZQ>),

citing a lack of evidence that a “repeat booster strategy” works in children.

The CDC under the Biden administration [recommended](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html)

(<https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>) the COVID vaccine for everyone at least 6 months old.

Typically, a change in vaccine recommendation is voted on by a panel of experts and then endorsed by the CDC director. The panel has not met to vote on changes in COVID immunization recommendations,

[Politico](https://www.politico.com/news/2025/05/27/the-)

(<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/05/27/the->

[cdc-is-no-longer-recommending-covid-vaccines-for-healthy-children-pregnant-women-00370864](#)),  
reported.

Food and Drug Administration  
Commissioner Marty Makary and  
National Institutes of Health Director  
Jay Bhattacharya joined Kennedy in  
announcing the change.

“There’s no evidence healthy kids need  
it today, and most countries have  
stopped recommending it for children,”  
Makary said.

The World Health Organization  
[recommends](#)  
(<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines/advice>), the  
COVID vaccine for pregnant women,  
children with comorbidities, and  
anyone who is immunocompromised.

Kennedy, a longtime vaccine skeptic  
whose views [run counter to those of medical experts](#)  
(<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/rfk-jr-is-completely-wrong-about-autism-say-scientists-and-parents/>), was grilled over his views on  
vaccines in a congressional hearing  
earlier this month.



Rep. Mark Pocan asked Kennedy if he would vaccinate his own children for measles today.

“Probably,” the secretary responded, later adding, “I don’t think people should be taking medical advice from me.” At the same hearing, Kennedy did not respond to the question of whether he would now vaccinate his children against chickenpox and polio.

The change in vaccine recommendations comes a week after the [administration made changes](https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/05/20/nx-s1-5405013/fda-covid-vaccine-limits)

(<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/05/20/nx-s1-5405013/fda-covid-vaccine-limits>) that could limit the

availability of COVID boosters. The FDA will now require vaccine manufacturers to conduct additional studies to evaluate the safety of the vaccines for children and healthy adults.

—[Emily Scaff](https://www.npr.org/search/?a=Emily%20Scaff) ([/search/?a=Emily%20Scaff](https://www.npr.org/search/?a=Emily%20Scaff)).



HOTLINE

**GOP senators  
scrutinize House-  
passed reconciliation  
bill**

NICHOLAS ANASTÁCIO

([/s/728599](https://www.npr.org/s/728599))

## **Grand prize: House version of ‘Big Beautiful bill’ would give \$1,000 to eligible newborns**

President Trump’s “One Big Beautiful Bill” would attempt to incentivize financial stability from the cradle by depositing \$1,000 into federally funded savings accounts for most newborn babies.

The budget-reconciliation bill, which passed the House last week and is awaiting Senate approval, includes a program in which the U.S. Treasury would automatically enroll eligible children born between Jan. 1, 2025, and Jan. 1, 2029. The Congressional Budget Office estimates the cost to taxpayers at nearly \$13 billion.

As laid out by the [House Ways and Means Committee](https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-One-Big-Beautiful-Bill-Section-by-Section.pdf)

(<https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-One-Big-Beautiful-Bill-Section-by-Section.pdf>), the child must be a U.S. citizen and both parents must provide their Social Security numbers to receive the one-time \$1,000

contributions. The SSNs must be deemed “work-eligible” in order for the child to receive the money.

When she was a senator from New York, Hillary Clinton proposed [a similar program](https://taxfoundation.org/blog/hillary-clintons-proposal-5000-baby-bond-essentially-already-here/) (<https://taxfoundation.org/blog/hillary-clintons-proposal-5000-baby-bond-essentially-already-here/>), in 2007 to give a \$5,000 bond to babies aimed specifically at defraying the cost of college. In addition, Colorado offers the [“First Step” program](https://firststep.collegeinvest.org) (<https://firststep.collegeinvest.org>), which deposits \$118 into eligible accounts and matches up to \$500 per in savings for up to five years, while Connecticut has a [“Baby Bonds” program](https://portal.ct.gov/ott/debt-management/ct-baby-bonds) (<https://portal.ct.gov/ott/debt-management/ct-baby-bonds>), that offers \$3,200 per child.

The “Trump Accounts,” formerly called the “Money Account for Growth and Advancement,” or “MAGA Accounts,” would establish a financial head start for all children.

Financial advisers encourage saving at young ages because of the advantage of compound interest. Advocates are hoping these accounts promote an

increase in the savings rate among Americans, which has steadily declined over the past decade from 6.4 percent in 2015 to 3.9 percent this year.

The tax-deferred Trump Accounts would allow anyone to contribute up to \$5,000 each year until the child turns 18. Withdrawals before age 18 from these accounts are subject to a 10 percent penalty.

Money generated from these accounts could be withdrawn penalty-free for education expenses, first-time home purchases, and starting a business. Withdrawals would be penalty-free after the age of 18 and taxed at long-term capital-gains rates.

Account holders would be granted partial access to funds at age 25 and full access for any purpose at age 30.

—[Bella Timmerding](#) ([/search/?a=Isabella%20Timmerding](#)).



## HEALTH CARE

**23andMe Halts  
Health-Related  
Genetic Test Sales**

Ancestry information and raw data will still be available, as the company undergoes FDA review.

SOPHIE NOVACK

([/s/65920](#))

**Bill would prevent 23andMe from  
selling genetic data during  
bankruptcy without consent**

Senators introduced a bill Tuesday that would safeguard consumers' genetic data from unregulated distribution and sale by biotech companies.

The move, led by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, comes in the wake of a bankruptcy filing by 23andMe, a financially troubled company that collects and stores DNA samples from millions of consumers seeking information about their ancestry. Grassley and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and John Cornyn, cosponsors of the [Don't Sell My DNA Act](#)

([https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/dont\\_sell\\_my\\_dna\\_act.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/dont_sell_my_dna_act.pdf)), expressed concern

that the company would sell off sensitive information without consumers' consent.

In March, the San Francisco-based company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The company announced plans to sell essentially all of its assets, which includes genetic data from over [15 million users worldwide](#)

(<https://medical.23andme.com/>).

“After a thorough evaluation of strategic alternatives, we have determined that a court-supervised sale process is the best path forward to maximize the value of the business,” Mark Jensen, chair and member of the Special Committee of the Board of Directors at 23andMe, [said in a press release](#)

(<https://investors.23andme.com/news-releases/news-release-details/23andme-initiates-voluntary-chapter-11-process-maximize>).

Bankruptcy law currently prohibits companies from selling personal information such as an individual's name, address, or Social Security number. It does not address the handling of genetic data. The Senate bill would close that loophole.

“This legislation would safeguard Americans’ sensitive genetic information to ensure it cannot be weaponized against them or made public without their knowledge and consent,” Cornyn said.

The bill also would require both written notice from the companies if they plan to sell the information and consumer consent during bankruptcy proceedings.

A similar bill, [the Genetic Information Privacy Act](#)

(<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2155>), was introduced in 2019 but died in the House.

—[Amelia Monroe](#) (</search/?a=Amelia%20Monroe>).