

A photograph of the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C., showing the iconic dome and neoclassical architecture under a cloudy sky.

Washington Update Jan. 2025

Jeff Sands, AVP, Federal Affairs for RCIS

About Me

Personal

- Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, AAS and Valdosta State University, BFA & MPA
- Favorite activity outside of work: spending time with wife and daughter, Alex and Harlow
- Avid golfer, likes to fish and bird hunt

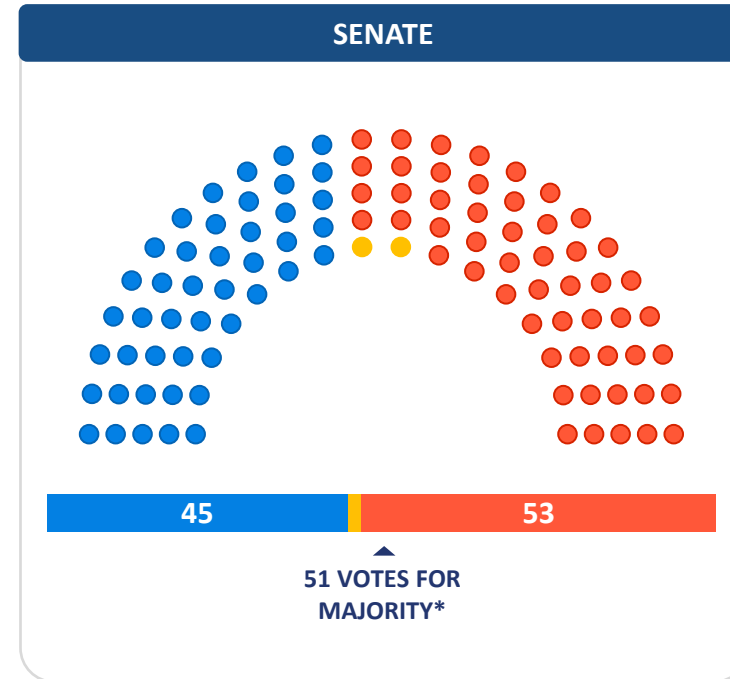
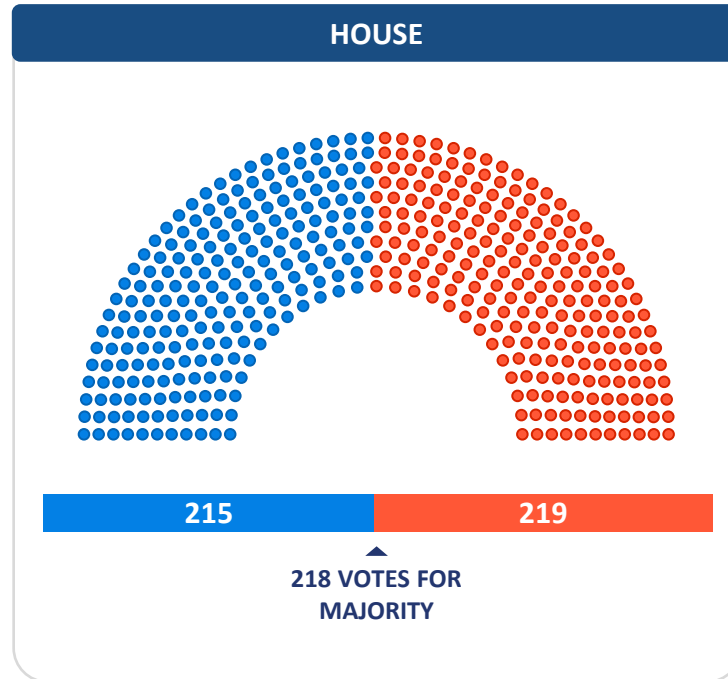
Professional

- Decade + in DC Agriculture
 - Former President of Agribusiness Club of DC
 - Worked for two House members and served as Senior Agriculture Policy advisor in Administration
 - Private sector work inclusive of trade associations and global corporate experience in advocacy for agriculture
 - Served on various trade association and conservation Boards



- **Overview of 119th Congress**
- **Recap of 118th Closing**
- **2025 Legislative/Policy Overview**
- **Administration Outlook**

Composition of the 119th Congress



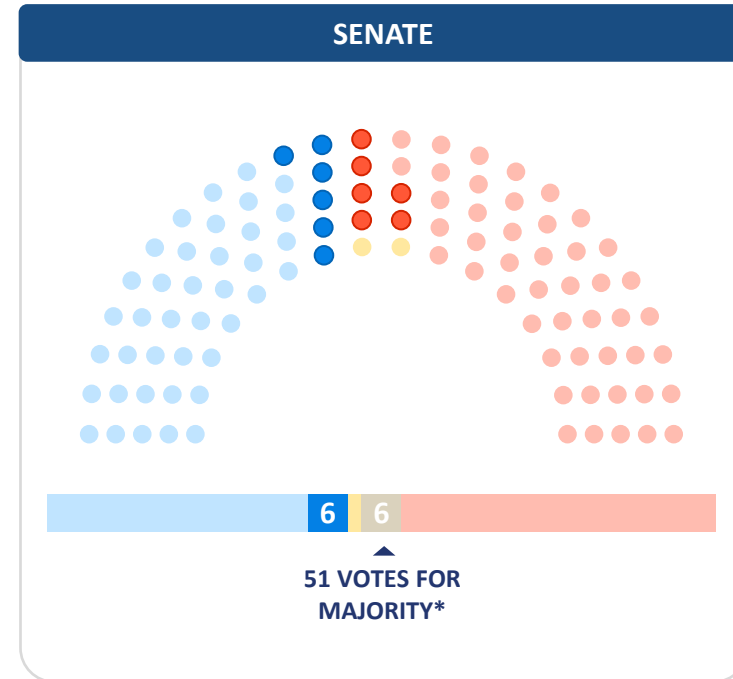
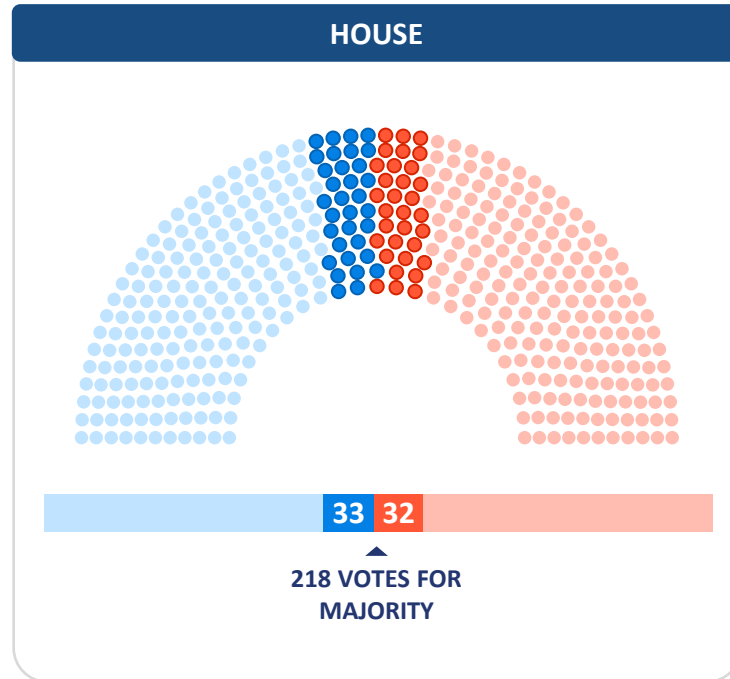
- *Notable:
- Gaetz
 - Walsh
 - Stefanik

*Leaving 119th Congress due to retirement or Administration



*Independent Senators Sanders (VT) and King (ME) caucus with Democrats

Composition of the 119th Congress: Freshman members



*Independent Senators Sanders (VT) and King (ME) caucus with Democrats

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



Mike Johnson
R-LA-4

Represents the Republican Party on the House floor

HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER



Steve Scalise
R-LA-1

Assists Republican leadership in managing the party's legislative program

HOUSE MAJORITY WHIP



Tom Emmer
R-MN-6

Maintains position as House majority whip in 119th Congress

Leads Republican Conference on policy development

NRCC CHAIR



Richard Hudson
R-NC-9

Maintains position as the National Republican Congressional Comm. Chair in 119th Congress

Organizes and manages Republican House campaign efforts

REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE CHAIR



Lisa McClain
R-MI-9

Elected as the Republican Conference Chair in 2024
Replaces Rep. Elise Stefanik, whom President-elect Trump has nominated to the UN

REPUBLICAN POLICY CONFERENCE CHAIR



Kevin Hern
R-OK-1

Elected as the Republican Policy Committee Chair in 2024

REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE SECRETARY



Erin Houchin
R-IN-9

Elected as the Republican Secretary of Conference in 2024
Responsible for intraparty committee assignments and leadership elections

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER



Hakeem Jeffries
D-NY-8

Maintains seat as the House's top Democrat

HOUSE MINORITY WHIP



Katherine Clark
D-MA-5

Reelected as House minority whip in 2024

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR



Pete Aguilar
D-CA-33

Reelected as Democratic caucus chair in 2024

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS VICE CHAIR



Ted Lieu
D-CA-36

Reelected as vice-chairman of the Democratic caucus

ASSISTANT CAUCUS LEADER



Joe Neguse
D-CO-2

Reelected as the Assistant Democrat Caucus Leader in 2024

DEMOCRATIC POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR



Debbie Dingell
D-MI-6

Reelected as Democrat Policy & Communications Committee Chair

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER



John Thune
R-SD

Elected as the Senate Majority Leader in 2024
Replaces Sen. Mitch McConnell who has decided to step down after 18 years

SENATE MAJORITY WHIP



John Barrasso
R-WY

Previously served as the Republican Conference Chair
Replaces Sen. John Thune after he was elevated to the role of Senate Majority Leader

REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE CHAIR



Tom Cotton
R-AR

Elected as the Chair of the Republican Conference in 2024
Responsible for intraparty committee assignments and leadership elections

REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIR



Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

Previously served as the Vice Chair of the Senate Republican Conference
Responsible for Senate Republican policy development

REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE VICE CHAIR



James Lankford
R-OK

Previously held by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (WV)
Responsible for taking minutes of the party conferences

NRSC CHAIR



Tim Scott
R-SC

Previously held by Sen. Steve Daines (MT)
Responsible for strengthening the Republican conference through recruiting and fundraising

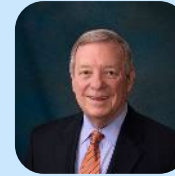
SENATE MINORITY LEADER



Chuck Schumer D-NY

Reelected as Democratic leader in the 119th Congress

SENATE MINORITY WHIP



Dick Durbin D-IL

Reelected as Senate minority whip in 2024

STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIR



Amy Klobuchar D-MN

Elevated to number 3 leadership position in the 119th Senate

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR



Cory Booker D-NJ

Elevated to number 4 leadership position in the 119th Senate

CO-VICE CHAIR OF CONFERENCE



Elizabeth Warren
D-MA

Assists Democratic leader in setting the Democratic agenda, messaging, and strategy

CO-VICE CHAIR OF CONFERENCE



Mark Warner
D-VA

Assists Democratic leader in setting the Democratic agenda, messaging, and strategy

CHAIR OF OUTREACH



Bernie Sanders
I-VT

Reelected as outreach chair in 2024

DSCC CHAIR



Gary Peters
D-MI

Reelected as chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee

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Farm Bill Reauthorization Turns Into Economic Assistance

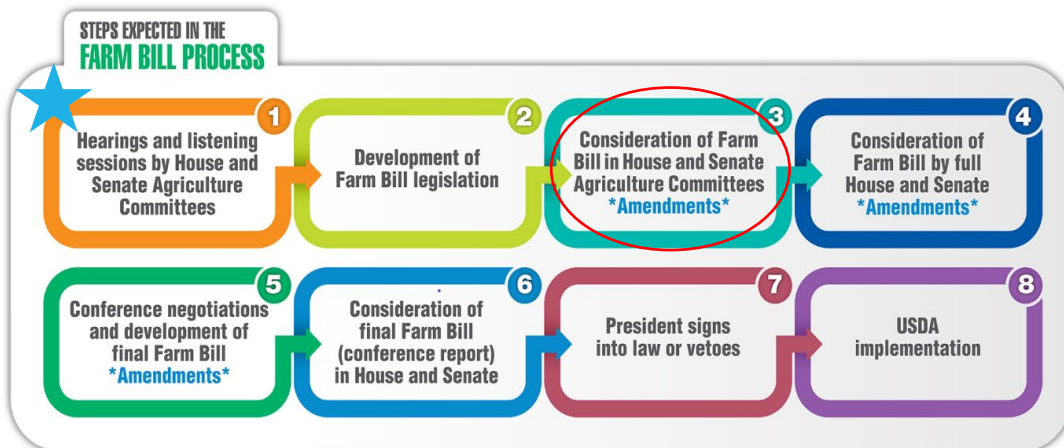
OVERVIEW

- While the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) is permanently authorized, the Farm Bill dictates much of how government and the private sector work together to support the people who grow and harvest our food.
- The last Farm Bill reauthorization was in December 2018 and now expires in September 2025.
- **House Committee on Agriculture considered its Farm Bill in May 2024, the measure passed 33-29.**

WHAT HAPPENED?

- Partisan and cameral arguments drug process on and ultimately led to breakdown. House and Senate versions of Committee released and/or passed legislation was notably different in policy visions.
- While Farm Bill program enhancements were initially a part of the discussion for EOY package (HR 10545), ultimately the 2018 Farm Bill was extended for another year until Sept. 2025. Disaster-related and Economic Assistance was authorized, leaving the Farm Bill debate to the 119th Congress.

HOW FAR WE MADE IT



Keys Areas of Focus	Our Position/Policy Provisions
DISASTER RELATED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30.78 billion authorized to address losses from droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters • Includes \$2 billion specifically for livestock producers affected by drought, wildfires, or floods • Provides individual technical assistance for non-insured producers applying for aid • Covers losses in crops, trees, bushes, vines, and infrastructure (poultry houses, etc.)
ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocates \$10 billion of total to mitigate economic losses caused by low commodity prices and high production costs. • Payments are calculated as the difference between expected and production costs and gross returns per acre for eligible commodities • Eligible acres include planted acres plus 50% of prevented planting acreage due to disasters
ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATING EXPENSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30 million authorized as “equitable relief” • Similar to \$25 million that was provided in years prior to specialty crop agents feeling pressures of cap factors in servicing Category C or Specialty Crops • AIPs awaiting agency guidance from USDA, but RCIS is taking steps to be ready to support once formula and instructions.

Farm Bill Reauthorization for 2025

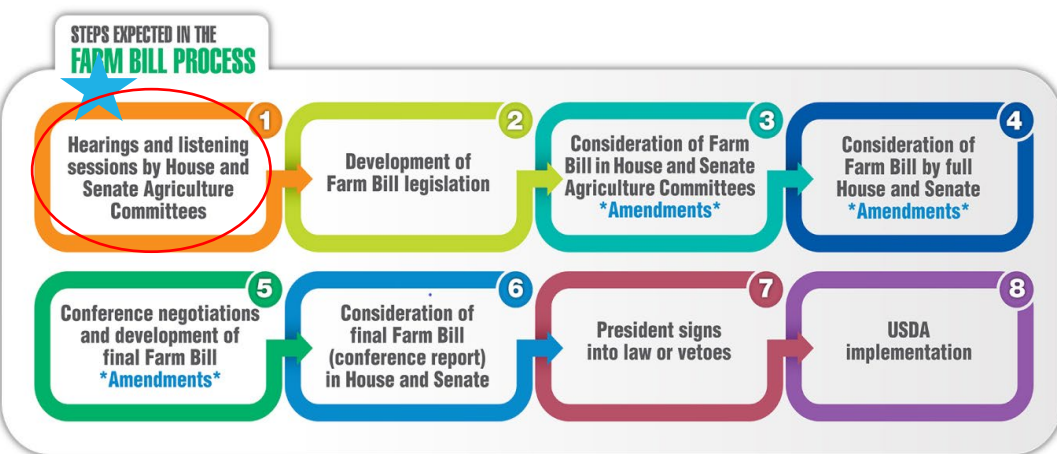
FARM BILL OVERVIEW

- While the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCIP) is permanently authorized, the Farm Bill dictates much of how government and the private sector work together to support the people who grow and harvest our food.

ZURICH / RCIS POSITION

- As a leading crop insurance provider, we support crop insurance for American agricultural producers delivered by private sector providers and agents. FCIP is the primary risk management tool that farmers have against weather and market volatility. It provides financial stability to rural communities, taxpayers and consumers alike.
- We advocate for public policy positions that ensure the FCIP remains viable for the private sector to deliver and enhance producers ability to manage their risks. Current market conditions and gaps in administrative recourse for compliance challenges have hampered customer and AIP experience in some areas of the program, we aim to provide remedy to that through the Farm Bill.

OUR JOURNEY / TIMELINE



Keys Areas of Focus	Our Position/Policy Provisions	Other Issues/Next Steps
REINSURANCE (AS TITLED BY AG CMTE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase reimbursement of LAE in high LR states Reinstates an inflation adjustment to increase Administrative and Operating reimbursements to commensurate levels. Potential for a new fund to better designate risk based on volatility. Or does this happen via Administrative means? 	<p><i>Potential Priorities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmer Act Specialty Crops (MAHA) Interest Deferral <p><i>Timeline</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brooke Rollins Confirmation on 1/15/25 Deputy Confirmation and Appointments for target mission areas- what does this mean for priorities? Confirmations and Budget Reconciliation will consume most of Q1/Q2 calendar. Disaster Assistance payments to go out late-Winter/Spring
PROGRAM COMPLIANCE AND INTEGRITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove burden of proof in reporting of Substantial Beneficial Interest provisioning. Eradicates unnecessary arbitration costs and a regulatory pathway that simplifies AIP and customer experience. Expedited resolution of compliance findings. Puts in place statutory requirements for RMA to respond to compliance findings (not civil or criminal fraud) within a certain time period. Reduces interest payments for next generation of farmers, brings more farmers into program. 	
ACTUARIAL SOUNDNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance marketability of new product developments. Ensures transparency by requiring AIP consultation and firm timelines for sales training materials through reform of the 508h process Provide authority to RMA to enforce actuarial soundness into pilot programs/products that have emerged from development cycle. Allows RMA to take recourse with product developer to adjust product to align with 1.0 actuarial rating as required by statute. 	

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 - Outlook
 - Budget Reconciliation Overview
 - “MAHA”
 - Issues
- Administration Outlook

A GOP trifecta will allow Republican legislation to advance more quickly through Congress



Republicans will start 2025 in control of the presidency and both chambers of Congress, **positioning the GOP to advance Trump-backed policies with minimal barriers**

TOP PRIORITIES



Tax cuts

Extension of 2017 tax cuts, with further cuts favoring wealthy Americans and corporations probable



Immigration

Mass deportations and strengthening the southern border; bipartisan support will be required to fully execute on campaign promises



Energy and climate

Rollbacks in clean-energy funding, increased drilling, and relaxed regulation; some bipartisan support may exist for streamlining permitting



Ukraine aid

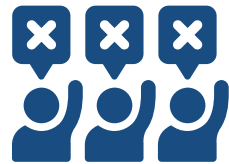
Skepticism around continued Ukraine support, with aid potentially ending in 2025

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

- **Tariffs:** Trump may push for tariffs for US manufacturing revival, facing internal opposition over cost and trade retaliation risks
- **Safety net cuts:** Cuts to programs including Medicaid and food stamps; allow ACA subsidies to expire to reduce government spending
- **Voter ID requirements:** Republicans support voter ID laws, but passage would require bipartisan support in the Senate

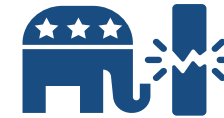
With a razor thin House majority, the GOP has little room to tolerate dissent

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES



PUBLIC OPPOSITION

Public opinion against unpopular proposals, like cuts to safety net programs, could impede GOP progress in Congress



REPUBLICAN DIVISIONS

GOP divisions may affect priorities, with deeply-Conservative members pushing for isolationism and traditional Republicans supporting free trade policies

UNLIKELY MOVE:

A national abortion ban appears improbable, with Trump distancing from such measures




Budget reconciliation overview

Allows for quick legislating




- Created via the Congressional Budget Act of 1974
- Provides an expedited process for passing congressional measures related to the budget

Cannot be filibustered

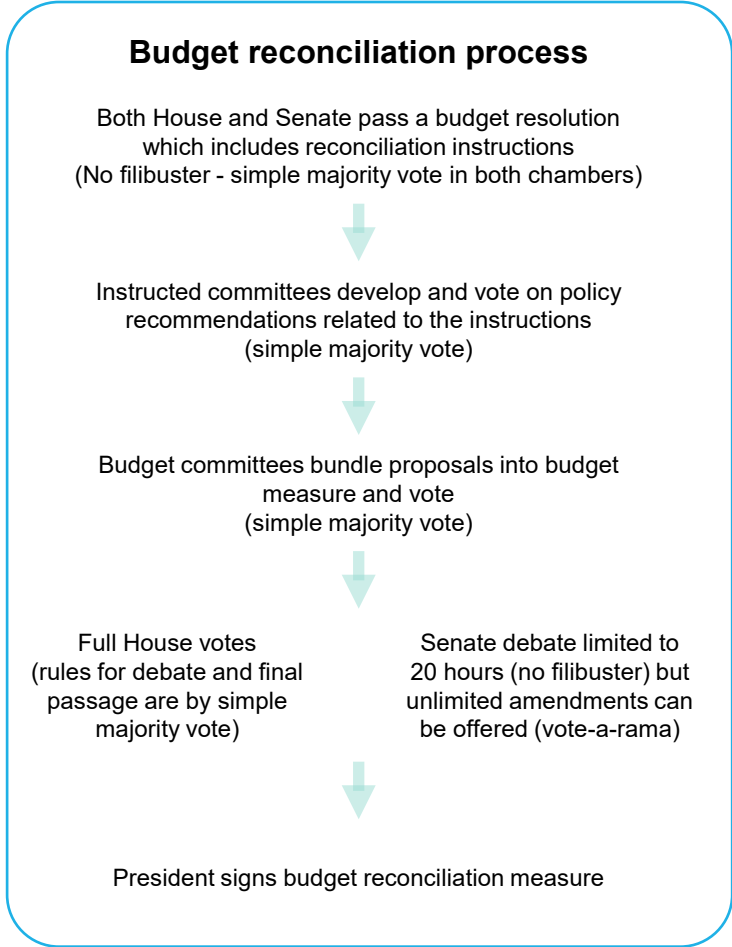


- Debate in Senate is limited to 20 hours
- Allows passage of certain legislation by simple majority

Provisions must abide by the “Byrd rule”



- Must have a non-incidental effect on the budget
- Must not change overall spending/revenue
- Must not add to the deficit outside the budget window covered by the bill

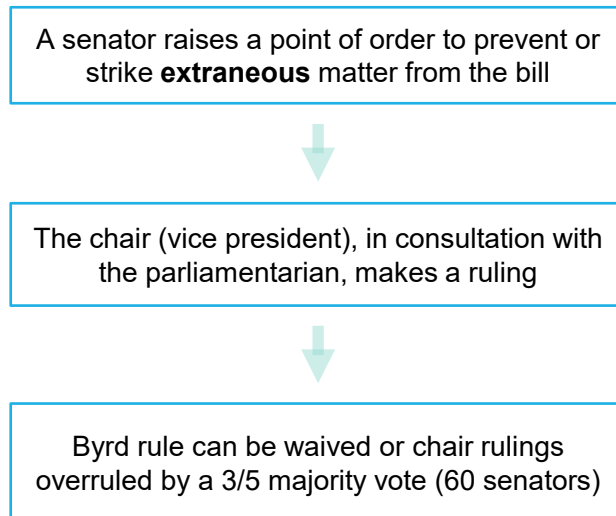


Background on the “Byrd rule”

BASIC INFORMATION

- Rule principally sponsored by **Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-WV)** to protect deliberative nature of the Senate and effectiveness of the budget reconciliation to reduce the deficit
- Utilized temporarily from 1985-89; **written into law in 1990**
- The rule defines what is an “extraneous” matter, e.g. what cannot be considered under budget reconciliation

BYRD RULE PROCESS



THE 6 DEFINITIONS OF EXTRANEIOUS MATTER

- It does not produce a change in outlays or revenues or a change in the terms and conditions under which outlays are made or revenues are collected
- It produces an outlay increase or revenue decrease when the instructed committee is not in compliance with its instructions
- It is outside of the jurisdiction of the committee that submitted the title or provision for inclusion
- It produces a change in outlays or revenues which is merely incidental to the non-budgetary components of the provision
- It would increase the deficit beyond the “budget window” covered by the reconciliation measure
- It recommends changes in Social Security.

“Make America Healthy Again” proposed actions on food safety from RFK, Jr. “MAHA” Movement will be an area to focus on.



PROPOSALS



- Advocates for banning or limiting ultra-processed foods, which he claims contribute to the rise in chronic disease like obesity and diabetes



- Calls for restrictions on seed oils like canola, soybean, and sunflower oil



- Proposes stricter controls or bans on certain pesticides and agricultural chemicals



- Supports increased transparency in food labeling

- › According to an NIH study, evidence supports the link between ultra-processed food consumption and chronic disease risk
- › Seed oils have been perceived as harmful due to claims that they cause inflammation, but health organizations like the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic regard these oils as safe when consumed in moderation
- › According to the NIH, prolonged exposure to pesticides can lead to various long-term health issues, though an outright ban could raise costs for both producers and consumers
- › Increased transparency in labeling is generally beneficial but according to a survey conducted by the International Food Information Council Foundation, overloading labels with information can cause consumers to doubt their food choices

IMPLICATIONS



Public health experts say that these types of food safety proposals could:

- Generally lead to better health outcomes and lower the risk of chronic illness
- Put pressure on the FDA to meet consumers expectations on food safety and nutrition, though his proposals may face hurdles in courts and Congress

KEY PRIORITIES IN THE 119TH CONGRESS



Farm Bill reauthorization: Stalemate during the 118th Congress lame duck session may punt the bill to 2025, when GOP-friendly amendments will have an easier time passing



Lowering food costs: A high priority for the new executive branch and a promise of the Trump campaign, despite multiple outstanding bills on food security in the 118th



Labor reform: Proposed caps on the H-2A program, which provides visas for seasonal agriculture workers

KEY DEADLINES TO WATCH

Farm Bill	Expires September 30, 2025
Conservation Reserve Program	Expires October 1, 2025
Dairy Margin Coverage Program	Expires December 31, 2025; reverts to “permanent law” on January 1, 2026

POTENTIAL COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

HOUSE

Agriculture



Glenn Thompson (R-PA-15)



Angie Craig (D-MN-2)

SENATE

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry



John Boozman (R-AR)



Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)

KEY PRIORITIES IN THE 119TH CONGRESS



Extending provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: A number of tax provisions in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act are projected to expire at the end of 2025



Standard deduction: The expiration of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will lead to a reduction in the size of the standard deduction unless Congress acts



SALT deduction: The \$10,000 limit of State and local tax deduction will expire if Congress does not act to extend the cap



Child tax credit: The Child Tax Credit will be reduced to \$1,000 per child unless Congress increases the amount

KEY DEADLINES TO WATCH

Changes to standard deduction	Expires December 31, 2025
Cap on SALT deduction	Expires December 31, 2025
Changes to the child tax credit	Expires December 31, 2025
Changes to the marginal tax rate	Expires December 31, 2025

POTENTIAL COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

HOUSE

Ways and Means



Jason Smith (R-MO-8)



Richard Neal (D-MA-1)

SENATE

Finance



Mike Crapo (R-ID)



Ron Wyden (D-OR)

KEY PRIORITIES IN THE 119TH CONGRESS



Repealing or reappropriating funding for the Inflation Reduction Act: Efforts on behalf of the new administration to repeal the IRA in part or entirely would require broad Congressional support; however, IRA projects popular in Republican districts would face opposition



Ending emissions regulations on the auto industry: Repeal emissions regulations on automobile manufacturers and end electric vehicle subsidies



Energy permitting reform: Cut permitting delays to remove much of the environmental review process

POTENTIAL COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

HOUSE

Energy and Commerce



Brett Guthrie
(R-KY-2)



Frank Pallone (D-NJ-6)

Natural Resources



Bruce Westerman
(R-AK-4)



Melanie Stansbury
(D-NM-1)

SENATE

Energy and Natural Resources



Mike Lee
(R-UT)



Martin Heinrich
(D-NM)

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Heads of Executive Departments



STATE
Marco Rubio



TREASURY
Scott Bessent



DEFENSE
Pete Hegseth



AG
Pam Bondi



INTERIOR
Doug Burgum



AGRICULTURE
Brooke Rollins



COMMERCE
Howard Lutnick



LABOR
Lori Chavez-DeRemer



HHS
RFK Jr.



HUD
Scott Turner



TRANSPORTATION
Sean Duffy



ENERGY
Chris Wright



EDUCATION
Linda McMahon



VA
Doug Collins



DHS
Kristi Noem

SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE



Brooke Rollins

President and CEO of America First Policy Institute

***1/15/25 Confirmation Hearing Begins**

BIOGRAPHY

- Helped establish the pro-Trump think tank, America First Policy Institute in 2021
- Acting director of Domestic Policy Council during Trump's first term

POLICY POSITIONS

Trusted ally to implement Trump's agenda

- Expected to implement Trump's policy agenda across the Department with likely program cuts and deregulation
- Will play a role in implementing Trump's tariffs



Thank You!