

Musk joins Massie-Trump Dispute as Kentucky Republicans defy Trump on ‘Beautiful’ Bill

MCKENNA HORSLEY
KENTUCKY LANTERN

The plot thickened as billionaire Elon Musk waded into the drama between President Donald Trump and defiant Kentucky Republican U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie.

Musk promised Monday evening to help Massie fend off any Republican primary challenger recruited by Trump, who is vowing to unseat Massie next year.

Massie most recently drew Trump’s wrath by opposing his bombing of Iran and before that voting against the mega-bill that supporters say delivers on the president’s campaign promises, though clashes between Massie and Trump date back to Trump’s first term.

And Massie is not the only Kentucky Republican who has defied Trump and party leaders by voting against the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

Even after a round of golf with the president on Saturday, Sen. Rand Paul voted against starting debate on the bill and on Tuesday against the bill itself, which required a tiebreaking vote by Vice President JD Vance to squeak out of the Republican-controlled Senate.

In a Republican Party that has fallen in lockstep behind Trump and a state that Trump has easily carried three times, Paul and Massie face political risks by getting on the wrong side of Trump and his MAGA base.

Political observers in Kentucky say the two may get away with it, however, because they are coming from Trump’s right on questions of government spending and fiscal responsibility and because they are viewed as acting on principle.

Sen. Rand Paul Paul voted

against President Trump’s domestic policy package Tuesday after a marathon Senate session. Before that he was the sole GOP co-sponsor of an April 30 resolution to terminate Trump’s tariffs. (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Stephen Voss, a political science professor at the University of Kentucky, said Paul, Massie and Musk “have been motivated by a right-leaning libertarianism that shows up in their politics regularly.”

“It’s a matter of principle that separates them from other Republicans and having Republican President Donald Trump dive so thoroughly into a big government, strong presidency, model of leadership cuts against the principles of all three of those men.”

Massie, an MIT-educated engineer who served as Lewis County judge-executive, was elected to Congress in 2012. His 4th Congressional District stretches from Ashland in the Appalachian hills westward along the Ohio River to the conservative suburbs of Northern Kentucky and Louisville.

Trump’s political operation has \$500 million ready to bolster — or punish — Republicans heading into midterm elections. A Trump-affiliated political action committee, MAGA Kentucky, launched a \$1 million ad buy against Massie last week, Axios reports. Ahead of the ad buy, Trump took to Truth Social to say Massie “is not MAGA, even though he likes to say he is” and vowed to campaign in Kentucky for “a wonderful American Patriot” candidate against the congressman.

Trump’s candidate has yet to emerge, but first-term Republican state Sen. Aaron Reed of Shelby County has been mentioned as a possibility in some

political circles.

MUSK TO MASSIE: ‘YOU’RE AWESOME’

On Monday, Musk, who has been publicly feuding with the president over the GOP domestic policy bill, waded into the fray, saying on his social media platform X that he would support Massie. Moments before Musk had vowed that Republicans “who campaigned on reducing government spending and then immediately voted for the biggest debt increase in history” would “lose their primary next year if it is the last thing I do on this Earth.”

Billionaire Elon Musk, left accompanied by U.S. President Donald Trump, right, and Musk’s son, X Musk, speaks during an executive order signing in the Oval Office at the White House on Feb. 11, 2025 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

Billionaire Elon Musk, left accompanied by U.S. President Donald Trump, right, and Musk’s son, X Musk, speaks during an executive order signing in the Oval Office at the White House on Feb. 11, 2025 in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

The congressman welcomed Musk’s support by sharing a Fox News article about the post Tuesday morning, to which Musk replied, “You’re awesome.”

Voss said it may become “a Trump versus Musk proxy war in Northern Kentucky,” though both men have a tendency to “jump from controversy to controversy.”

If attention on the primary blows over by next year, Massie could have an easier time keeping his job, Voss said, but “he may have other ambitions than merely keep-



Anna Moneymaker Photo

Kentucky’s U.S. Rep. Thomas Massie was one of two Republicans to vote against the spending and tax package that President Donald Trump was urging the House to pass. In March, Massie spoke to reporters after casting the sole Republican vote against a bill that averted a government shutdown.

ing his job.”

“Thomas Massie has become a household name in a way few members of the House of Representatives get to be,” Voss said. “The fame and notoriety he’s getting might put his current seat in greater jeopardy, but it opens up lots of opportunities.”

For Republicans hoping to position themselves as the future of their party, particularly if Trump’s popularity with voters dwindles and the GOP takes losses in midterm elections, “being on the side of the GOP that resisted Trump can start to pay off.”

“Right now, going against Trump is the kiss of death, but that may change,” Voss said.

At least one Republican in Congress, North Carolina Republican U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, said he won’t seek reelection after voting against Trump’s bill. Tillis’ opposition stemmed from the bill’s funding cuts which he said would force “painful decisions” about Medicaid and hurt his state.

In contrast, Massie and Paul objected to the bill because it

will send federal deficits soaring.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a calculation Sunday showing the Senate version of the bill would add \$3.25 trillion to federal budget deficits over 10 years.

Tres Watson, a political consultant and former spokesperson for the Republican Party of Kentucky, said Massie’s 2026 primary is “definitely going to be a fight” especially with Musk’s interest in the race. Watson added that the endorsements of Trump and Musk might have less impact on the contest than the resources each could put behind a candidate.

Watson said Massie has a strong set of beliefs and he will vote for them “whether that puts him in very awkward positions with very awkward bedfellows or not.” As a fiscally conservative, libertarian Republican, “he’s going to be against this bill.”

Paul is similar to Massie but “occasionally will play ball a little bit more,” Watson said.

Paul and Trump likely developed rapport during the 2016 campaign, “whereas Massie has kind of always been a thorn in Trump’s side dating back to the first administration.”

Paul hasn’t faced Trump’s wrath like Massie has.

Musk’s involvement could also mean the primary will be quite expensive. Groups affiliated with Musk spent nearly \$20 million backing a conservative candidate in the Wisconsin Supreme Court election earlier this year, according to media reports. Musk also gave the state Republican Party \$2 million. Despite all that, Musk’s candidate lost.

Massie thanked Musk Tuesday from his campaign account on X, adding Musk’s purchase of X, formerly Twitter, and making it the “platform for free speech has already helped my cause immensely,” allowing the congressman to “bypass conventional media to refute the lies of both political parties and to provide transparency about how Congress works and what’s actually inside of the bills we vote on.”

Massie said opposing the megabill and the Iran strikes “recently earned me the ire of the swamp and a fight for my re-election,” but the race is instead “a referendum on whether members of Congress can think and act independently based on what’s best for the country, or whether all members of congress must be reduced to rubber stamps for their respective political parties and swampy special interests.”

“I’m extremely thankful to have Elon Musk’s financial assistance to continue my mission as an independent voice in Congress for my constituents,” Massie wrote.

Dems force tough votes on GOP Megabill: Rural hospitals, SNAP Cuts, Medicaid

ASHLEY MURRAY
AND JENNIFER SHUTT
KENTUCKY LANTERN

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans were closing in Monday on passing their version of the “big beautiful” tax break and spending cut bill that President Donald Trump wants to make law by a self-imposed July Fourth deadline.

But the chamber’s Democrats first kicked off a marathon of amendment votes, forcing their GOP colleagues to go on the record on tough issues, including cuts to health and food safety net programs. As of early evening, Democrats had not prevailed on any votes.

The tactic is used by the opposition party during massive budget reconciliation fights to draw attention to specific issues even as their amendments are likely to fail.

Democrats decried numerous measures in the mega-bill, including new work reporting requirements for Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for low-income people and people with disabilities.

Loud opposition has also swelled as legislative proposals shift significant costs of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, to states for the first time.

“I say to our colleagues, ‘Vote for families over billionaires,’” Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota said on the Senate floor.

The heart of the nearly 1,000-page legislation extends and expands the 2017 tax law to keep individual income tax rates at the same level and makes permanent some tax breaks on business investments and research and development costs.

The bill would also put in motion some of Trump’s campaign promises, including no tax on qualifying tips, overtime or car loan interest, but only for a few years.

Here are some key votes so far:

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray tried to remove language from the bill that would block Medicaid payments from going to Planned Parenthood for one year unless the organization stops performing abortions.

Federal law already bars funding from going toward abortions, with limited exceptions, but GOP lawmakers have proposed blocking any other funding from going to the organization, effectively blocking Medicaid patients from going to Planned Parenthood for other types of health care.

Murray said the proposal would have a detrimental impact on health care for lower-income women and called it a “long-sought goal of anti-choice extremists.”

MEDICAID FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

Senators from both political parties crossed the aisle over whether the federal government should reduce how much a state is given for its Medicaid program if that state uses its own taxpayer dollars to enroll immigrants, a living in the country without proper documentation.

The provision was included in an earlier version of the bill, but the Senate parliamentarian ruled it didn’t comply with the complex rules for moving a budget reconciliation bill.

The vote was 56-44, but since it was on waiving a budget point of order, at least 60 senators had to agree to set aside the rules and move forward with the amendment, so the vote failed.

Democratic Sens. Cathe-

rine Cortez Masto of Nevada, Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, and Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock of Georgia voted with GOP senators. Maine’s Collins voted with most of the chamber’s Democrats against moving forward.

Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn asked for the vote, saying he believes the policy change would reduce undocumented immigration.

REDUCTION IN FUNDING FOR CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU

An amendment to stop a nearly 50% reduction in funding for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was blocked by Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, who chairs the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat who championed the CFPB after the 2008 financial collapse, attempted to bring the amendment to the floor saying the agency “is the financial watchdog to keep people from getting cheated on credit cards and mortgages and Venmo and payday loans and a zillion other transactions.”

MEDICAID HOSPITALS AND MATERNAL MORTALITY

Senators voted 48-52 to reject Delaware Democratic

Sen. Lisa Blunt Rochester’s proposals to send the legislation back to committee to remove language cutting certain funding for Medicaid, which she said would negatively impact “vital hospital services, especially labor and delivery rooms.”

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

New Mexico Democratic Sen. Ben Ray Lujan offered a motion to commit the bill back to committee in order to remove all changes related to the Supplemental Nutri-

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tion Assistance Program, or SNAP. It was rejected following a 49-51 vote, though Alaska Republican Sens. Dan Sullivan and Murkowski voted in favor.

MEDICAID WORK REQUIREMENTS

Senators voted 48-52 to reject a proposal from Delaware Democratic Sen. Chris Coons that would have sent the bill back to committee to remove language requiring Medicaid enrollees to work, participate in community service, or attend an educational program at least 80 hours a month. Alaska’s

Murkowski was the only member of her party to vote in favor of the effort.

RURAL HOSPITALS AND MEDICAID

Maine’s Collins and Alaska’s Murkowski both voted for a proposal from Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Ed Markey that would have removed parts of the bill changing Medicaid.

But even with some bipartisan support, the changes were rejected on a 49-51 vote that would have technically sent the bill back to committee for three days to implement the changes.

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