

Senators Begin Deal-Making to Secure Tax Votes



From left, Senators Tim Scott, Patrick J. Toomey, John Cornyn and Orrin G. Hatch, members of the finance committee, spoke to reporters after a meeting with President Trump at the White House on Monday. Credit Tom Brenner/The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans returned to Washington on Monday determined to speed ahead with their tax overhaul as lawmakers aimed toward a possible floor vote this week in what promises to be a frenzied stretch to pass a tax package by Christmas.

With several Senators not yet committed to supporting the \$1.5 trillion tax plan, the week is expected to be punctuated by behind-the-scenes arm twisting and deal-making as Republican leaders work to find enough votes to pass the bill along party lines. At least a half-dozen senators have raised concerns about the bill, including its potential to add to the federal deficit and a provision that would eliminate the Affordable Care Act requirement that most Americans have health insurance or pay a penalty.

Many of those senators are in discussions with party leaders over how to tweak the bill to address their concerns. James Lankford, Republican of Oklahoma, said on Monday that he is in talks over a proposal meant to ensure the tax plan does not balloon the deficit. Mr. Lankford said the Senate is discussing inserting a provision that would trigger tax increases — as yet unspecified — after a period of years if federal revenues fall short of lawmakers' projections.

Other deals are also under discussion, including a provision intended to satisfy Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who has expressed concern that the tax cut for so-called pass-through companies — such as small businesses, hedge funds, real estate concerns like Mr. Trump's, and large partnerships — was not generous enough.

On Monday, several Republicans from the Senate Finance Committee, including its chairman, Orrin G. Hatch of Utah, emerged from a lunch with President Trump at the White House saying they were confident they would have the necessary votes to pass the package this week and would be able to resolve differences with the House version so that the bill could be signed into law in short order.

"We're generally able to get together and solve problems," Mr. Hatch said of the House and Senate. White House officials privately said they hoped the two chambers could resolve their differences privately and informally to avoid a potentially lengthy and divisive formal conference that typically is needed to finalize major legislation.

Asked whether the legislation could be completed by Christmas, Mr. Hatch said: "I hope so."

He added that Democrats should "get off their duffs" and support the plan. Mr. Trump, for his part, said later in the day that he wasn't interested in getting Democratic support.

At an event in the Oval Office of Native American code talkers from World War II, Mr. Trump boasted that the package would be "a tremendous tax cut, the biggest in the history of our country," and said there was "great receptivity" to it on Capitol Hill.

Republican Tax Plan: How to Make Sense of the Push in Congress

It's virtually impossible to fully understand, let alone keep up with, the flood of proposals, amendments and analyses that continue to pour out. Here are some of the big-picture ideas to keep in mind as this political sausage is being made.



“If we win, we’ll get some Democratic senators joining us,” Mr. Trump said. “But I’m not so interested in that. We’re really interested in getting it passed.”

Mr. Trump is expected to go to Capitol Hill on Tuesday to have lunch with Republican lawmakers before meeting with leadership of both parties in the afternoon.

On Monday, Mr. Trump tweeted that the tax bill was progressing and that “with just a few changes, some mathematical” the tax package would deliver benefits to individuals and businesses.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/27/us/politics/senate-tax-bills-potential-hurdle-republicans.html>

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