

# FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING

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## BUSINESS MEETING

BEFORE THE

### COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

### UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 11, 2025

Printed for the use of the Committee on Rules and Administration



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2025

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

FIRST SESSION

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## FULL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

UNITED STATES SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:01 a.m., in Room 301, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Mitch McConnell, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

**Present:** Senators McConnell, Cruz, Capito, Wicker, Fischer, Hyde-Smith, Hagerty, Britt, Boozman, Padilla, Klobuchar, Merkley, Ossoff, Bennet, and Welch.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE MITCH MCCONNELL, CHAIRMAN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF KENTUCKY**

Chairman MCCONNELL. The Committee on Rules and Administration will come to order. Today, our Committee meets to consider Senate Resolution 526, which is based on a simple idea—if Congress cannot keep the lights on, the U.S. Senate should not expect to be paid as usual. If the Federal Government grinds to a halt, but elected officials continue to collect full salaries without interruption, the American people are right to be frustrated.

This resolution authored by Senator Kennedy is an attempt to address that disconnect. It would set up a clear process after the next General Election. In the event of a Government shutdown, Senators would see their pay withheld and released only after the Government reopens.

Now, let me say at the outset, this resolution does not absolve us from doing our job. The best way to avoid shutdowns is and has always been to pass a full year appropriations bill on time. Shutdowns happen because we fail to uphold our responsibility and accountability matters.

I appreciate Senator Kennedy offering this resolution. It is straightforward and it reflects the basic reality that Congress's failures have wide ranging consequences. With that, I now recognize my colleague, Senator Padilla.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ALEX PADILLA, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you and all of our colleagues here as folks continue to trickle in. This Committee has a unique charge of upholding the Senate's traditions and procedures with the purpose of helping the Senate as a body function and function on a bipartisan basis.

It is in that spirit that I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Kennedy, and your staffs for your willingness to work with us to address some of the significant concerns that we had with the original version of this resolution.

Now, the version of the resolution before us today that we are considering today does reflect changes that we requested, as well as changes that were requested by the Secretary of the Senate, in order to produce the legal, Constitutional, and operational issues with the original resolution.

Because of those changes, I will be recommending that we vote in favor of sending this resolution out of Committee and to the full Senate for further consideration. But before we do that, I do want to briefly raise a couple of points that I think the full Senate should consider and address before final adoption. First, I believe that we should treat Members of the House and the Members of the Senate in the same way.

Under the Senate rules, legislation to do that would be referred to the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee. The current resolution before us, is before us, only because it impacts Members of the Senate and does not speak to Members of the House.

But by doing so, it would place the Senate on unequal footing with the House and potentially adversely complicate shutdown negotiations in the future. Second, I appreciate the key changes to take into account the 27th Amendment of the Constitution. I will quote, "no law varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and representatives shall take effect until an election of representatives shall have intervened."

I know it has been partly addressed here, but it is also true that the Constitution also says that Member pay is to be set by law, yet Senate Resolution 526 is just that, is a resolution without the force of law. As a result, I do think the Senate must have additional conversations following today's vote to ensure that this effort is done in a way that the Senate is able to Constitutionally and legally implement.

Again, I thank the Chairman and Senator Kennedy's good faith work on this resolution. Having registered my concerns and the work that remains, I am prepared to support moving this resolution to the full Senate. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Thank you, Senator Padilla. Senator Bennet is recognized to offer an amendment.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Chairman. It is good to see you and I am glad everybody is here. I call up Bennet Amendment Number 1. My amendment would prohibit former Members of Congress from registering as lobbyists, not for one year or two years, but for the entirety of their retirement from public service.

This amendment addresses a serious problem in our democracy, the buying and selling of influence, and this is not a new problem. I first introduced this legislation in 2010. Since then, the amount spent on lobbying and the number of lobbyists has only grown. Last year, spending on federal lobbying reached a new high, topping \$4.5 billion, a 37 percent increase from a decade ago.

Research shows that in the 1970's and 80's, it was relatively rare for former Members of Congress to become lobbyists. That began

to change in the 90's, and that trend has accelerated ever since. There are now 359 former Members who are registered lobbyists. This is not just an issue of how Members spend their time after they leave these halls. It strikes at the core of our democracy.

When Coloradans, or Texans, or Virginians send their elected representatives to Washington, they expect them to be focused on their needs and the needs of their communities. They do not want them to take votes with an eye on their next job opportunity. I think most Members do not do that. I think most Members are serious public servants who put the interests of their constituents first.

But even the appearance of this revolving door erodes Americans' trust in our democracy, our rule of law, and the legislative process. This amendment puts forward what I think are some commonsense reforms.

It bans Members from lobbying. It adds new transparency requirements. That is what Coloradans expect, and that is what the American people expect. It is what they deserve. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCONNELL. Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. I move to table the Bennet amendment.

Chairman McCONNELL. The question is on the motion to table Senator Bennet's amendment. All those in favor say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman McCONNELL. All opposed, nay.

[Chorus of nays.]

Chairman McCONNELL. The ayes appear to have it. Senator Bennet's amendment is tabled. Senator Ossoff is recognized to offer an amendment.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the Chair and Ranking Member for convening us today. I call up my amendment, Ossoff 3. Folks, we have a problem, which is that Members of Congress are playing the stock market while sitting in office, buying and selling shares of publicly traded stock while making decisions how to regulate those companies, while privy to confidential corporate information, while privy to confidential national security information.

It is so corrosive to public trust in this institution. The American people expect their elected representatives to put the public interest first, not our private financial interest. Yet, time and again, we hear about Members of Congress in both political parties, trading stocks like that is their day job, rather than representing the constituents who should be our highest priority.

This is not controversial among the American public. Overwhelming majorities of Democrats, Independents, Republicans want to ban stock trading by Members of Congress. We have made a lot of progress in the Senate in the last couple of years building a bipartisan coalition to ban it.

In fact, legislation that Senator Merkley and I have worked on with bipartisan colleagues in the Homeland Security Committee passed out of that Committee for the first time with bipartisan support to ban stock trading by Members of Congress. That bill still has not been brought to the floor.

We all know that there are private conversations with Members going to folks in leadership saying they do not want it to come to the floor. We need to get this done. We have the opportunity right now in this Committee to send a powerful message to the American people that we take seriously their deep concern and their justified concern about ethics in the U.S. Congress.

My amendment is very simple. In a year's time, stock trading by Senators is prohibited under Senate rules. That the text of this, the assets that are covered, are all drawn from the painstakingly negotiated bipartisan legislation that has been agreed by the Homeland Security Committee.

This will force us, by a date certain, to finish the job of advancing that legislation. This will give the American people confidence that we understand, and we accept our job is not to enrich ourselves. Our job is to advance the flourishing, and prosperity, and health of our constituents.

I understand that there may be some parliamentary effort to avoid a vote on this. I know that there are Senators who do not want to take a vote on this. But before we do that, Mr. Chairman, why don't we see this as an opportunity?

What a great day this would be if instead of continuing to evade this question, stock trading by Senators, this Committee, with its reputation for excellence, came together across the aisle and passed this amendment. Ban stock trading by United States Senators. Do the right thing. I urge a yes vote. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I second the motion of my colleague from Georgia. If there is a motion to table, is that motion debatable? In other words, can we give everyone an opportunity to express their views before this issue is tabled?

Chairman MCCONNELL. It is not debatable.

Senator MERKLEY. Then I would ask my colleagues, if somebody is thinking about tabling this motion, can you just wait until everyone who wants to express themselves on this has had a chance to do so? It would be a courtesy to extend.

I do think that courtesy is important because this issue is important. We all have a collective interest in Americans seeing that we act with integrity that is not corrupted by our concern about our pocketbook over the public interest.

There is no way if you have a huge portfolio concentrated in a particular area, or you have a specific stock that would be affected by legislation, there is not a voice in your head recognizing that and perhaps exercising some influence over how you might act.

If you have a huge renewable energy portfolio, then maybe tax credits for renewable energy pass into your mind, mmhmm, pretty good idea for my investments. If you have a huge inventory of bank stocks, or maybe you have fossil stocks, or who knows what, that should never be a voice that influences us.

This straightforward amendment for ourselves and our spouses is in the interest of this Senate serving the American people. We are at a time when the public opinion of the work we do in Congress is incredibly low. Every few months there is an article, I saw one just this last week, about stock trades that occurred before an

important public action was taken, and the public goes, there it goes again.

Why can't they serve the public. I would encourage us to take this up. I do recognize that this is not legislation that would affect the House. But I was thinking back to when I was—became Speaker of the House in Oregon, and in our rules, we adopted gift rules that affected only the House of Representatives in Oregon. We called it the \$10 standard.

You could give someone an apple pie, a cup of coffee, a t-shirt, a ball cap, but you could not take—a lobbyist could not take a person on trips. They could not take them to sweetheart tickets for concerts, or playoffs, or so on and so forth. It really changed the culture, and it led to the Oregon Legislature adopting a very similar law. I think it is well worth, well worth our doing this here for our Senate.

We have been debating this for over a decade. It has been well over a decade when I first became involved in this. I so appreciate my colleague from Georgia picking up the torch this year and really helping to drive this forward. But let us debate this. Let us vote on this. Let us not table this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCONNELL. [Technical problems]—Senator Ossoff, it is the practice of this Committee that amendments must be related to the matter under consideration, which is consistent with Committee Rule number four. Your amendment is not related to Member pay during a Government shutdown. As a result the amendment falls.

Senator OSSOFF. Mr. Chairman, I appeal the ruling of the Chair.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Is there a motion to table the appeal?

Senator FISCHER. Mr. Chairman, since Senator Ossoff has appealed the ruling of the chair, I would offer an amendment that—or I would move that we table his amendment.

Senator OSSOFF. Is the motion to table the amendment, or to table the appeal?

Senator FISCHER. Table the amendment—the appeal, I am sorry. Table the appeal.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Well, an aye vote supports the ruling of the Chair.

Senator FISCHER. Correct.

Chairman MCCONNELL. All those opposed say nay.

[Chorus of nays.]

Chairman MCCONNELL. In the opinion of the chair, the ayes have it. The ruling of the Chair—

Senator OSSOFF. Mr. Chairman, I ask for a recorded vote.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Oh, okay. Yes, I am sorry. Ask for a roll call vote on the motion to table the appeal. Is there a sufficient second?

Senator MERKLEY. Yes, I second.

Chairman MCCONNELL. It appears that a third of the Members present demand a roll call vote. Will the clerk call the roll?

The Clerk. Senator Cruz?

Senator CRUZ. Aye.

The Clerk. Senator Capito?

Senator CAPITO. Aye.

The Clerk. Senator Wicker?

Senator WICKER. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Fischer?  
 Senator FISCHER. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Hyde-Smith?  
 Senator HYDE-SMITH. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Hagerty?  
 Senator HAGERTY. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Britt?  
 Senator BRITT. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Boozman?  
 Senator BOOZMAN. Aye.  
 The Clerk. Senator Padilla?  
 Senator PADILLA. No.  
 The Clerk. Senator Schumer?  
 Senator PADILLA. No by proxy.  
 The Clerk. Senator Warner?  
 Senator PADILLA. No by proxy.  
 The Clerk. Senator Klobuchar?  
 Senator KLOBUCHAR. No.  
 The Clerk. Senator Merkley?  
 Senator MERKLEY. No.  
 The Clerk. Senator Ossoff?  
 Senator OSSOFF. No.  
 The Clerk. Senator Bennet?  
 Senator BENNET. No.  
 The Clerk. Senator Welch?  
 Senator WELCH. No.  
 The Clerk. Chairman McConnell?  
 Senator MCCONNELL. Aye.  
 The Clerk. The ayes are 9. The noes are 8.

Chairman MCCONNELL. Is there further debate on the—on this motion to table Senator Ossoff's appeal, the ayes are nine and the nays are eight. The motion to table is agreed to. Is there further debate or amendment to S.RES. 526?

[No response.]

Chairman MCCONNELL. Hearing none, the question is on ordering the resolution favorably reported. The reporting quorum is present. All those in favor say aye.

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman MCCONNELL. All those opposed, nay.

[No response.]

Chairman MCCONNELL. In the opinion of the chair, the ayes have it. S.RES. 526 is favorably reported. I ask unanimous consent that in preparing the measure for reporting, the staff be authorized to make any required technical or conforming changes. Thank you, everyone. Without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:19 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]