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[00:00:12] **Speaker 1** Lots happening out of Washington. Between Elon Musk's cost cutting moves, eliminating positions and taking aim at whole agencies, and now Republican budget provisions that extend tax cuts while at the same time looking for massive spending reductions to offset them. Wisconsin Democratic U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joins us now. Thanks very much for being here.

[00:00:36] **Speaker 2** Thanks for having me. I appreciate it.

[00:00:37] **Speaker 1** So just to lay this out, the House Republican budget resolution calls for $4.5 trillion in tax cuts, while at the same time offsetting that with what could be more than $800 billion in cuts to Medicaid and food programs. The Senate version, as you know, spends on border security and the military with these tax cuts to come. What is your reaction to these proposals?

[00:01:02] **Speaker 2** Well, I was watching closely as the House deliberated on the budget. At first it didn't look like they had the votes even within the Republican ranks to get it passed. It did pass. And these cuts, primarily targeting Medicaid are draconian. And I can tell you that my phones have been ringing off the hook with people very concerned about the impact it would have. Nationwide, over 72 million people rely on Medicaid in some fashion. People who are in long term care. Our seniors oftentimes have Medicaid as the primary payer for their care. A third of all children are on Medicaid. Many pregnancies and deliveries are funded through Medicaid and people with disabilities. Disproportionately in their adult lives rely on Medicaid. And the calls we're getting. For example, Rene from Milwaukee, who has stage four metastatic breast cancer, is terrified about the possibility of losing Medicaid, which pays for her treatments right now. Without it, she and her husband with either faith based bankruptcy or a death much earlier than otherwise if she could continue her her Medicaid. This is devastating. The idea that Elon Musk and his billionaire friends, Donald Trump and others, are trying to fund their tax breaks by taking away your health care is just outrageous, and we've got to organize and stand up against.

[00:02:55] **Speaker 1** And yet Republicans say that what you're talking about is simply fearmongering. That the word Medicaid appears nowhere in this Republican House resolution.

[00:03:08] **Speaker 2** You know what? The budget resolution directs various committees of the House to find these deep cuts, and the committees that they have directed to find these deep cuts are the ones with jurisdiction over Medicaid and jurisdiction over these nutrition programs, for example, low income children. So they may run from taking responsibility for their actions. But it is very clear that they cannot achieve the type of deep cuts that they're talking about to fund tax breaks for the top 5% of Americans. They can't hide from the fact that Medicaid is the biggest target.

[00:04:01] **Speaker 1** They also speak to waste, fraud and abuse at significant levels in Medicaid. What about that?

[00:04:12] **Speaker 2** So I am absolutely for rooting out waste, fraud and abuse. And I think I speak for all of my Democratic colleagues and certainly all my Republican colleagues. This is something that we are unified on. If President Trump was serious about rooting out fraud, waste and abuse, he would not have fired 17 inspector generals whose job it is to root out fraud, waste and abuse. These inspector general's are non nonpartisan, impartial overseers of agencies that spend people's taxpayer dollars. But yet President Trump fired without cause. The very people whose job it is to do that. Now we have this new so-called Department of Government Efficiency, which is not a department of government. It hasn't been set up by Congress. It hasn't been empowered by Congress. It's headed by the richest man on earth, Elon Musk, who is not a government employee, has not been confirmed by the Senate, who has not run for office and won. And they aren't looking at efficiency, waste or abuse. They are just taking a sledgehammer to these agencies, hiring all or firing all probationary employees. These are people who have been there a year or less now, demanding that the departments all Create plans to sever massive numbers of their employees. The funding freezes that we've seen. These are all overreaches of authority that Doge and Elon Musk don't have. And we've really got to differentiate from the very important responsibility to go after fraud, waste and abuse and what they're doing, which is just, again, taking a sledgehammer to these agencies.

[00:06:27] **Speaker 1** House hack how head spinning is what's happening right now with all of that.

[00:06:34] **Speaker 2** It it is what they warned us they would do. Steve Bannon, Steve Miller, other top advisers to Trump, told the American public, we are going to flood the zone. And boy, does it feel like that's exactly what they're doing, You know, announcement after announcement many times, a major announcement happening on a Friday evening or over the weekend when it's much harder to get the word out and respond. But you know what? We had an experience with the Trump presidency before, and we had an experience with an attempt to take away your health care about that. And the American people rose up. They realized that the Affordable Care Act had created the opportunity for millions who previously couldn't get coverage because they had a preexisting condition or some other disqualifying event in their lives, and they now have access to health insurance. And they fought back. We fought back. And we're going to have to do that around Medicaid and a number of other issues that are under attack by this administration and have to work together to do that.

[00:07:56] **Speaker 1** Because with budget reconciliation, allowing Republicans to pass their budget without the support of Democrats. What can your side of the aisle do about the budget or the chainsaw being taken to government operations?

[00:08:13] **Speaker 2** Well, I'm going to focus particularly on the latter. We have to remember our U.S. Constitution. Congress makes the laws, and it is the administration that is to implement and administer those laws. And while reconciliation and the budget can pass on a simple majority vote in the Senate, all other legislation requires bipartisan majorities. And so we have already passed a set of laws that are being defied by Joe, by Elon Musk, and by the Trump administration. Some of that's going to be fought out in court. I'm kind of thinking of the three C's as how we fight back the courts, the Congress and our constituents. That is how we are going to hold folks to account. We still have a Constitution. We still have laws that have been passed by this Congress in the previous Congresses, and they need to be fully and faithfully implemented by this administration. And if not, we need to stand up and fight for the people of this country and Wisconsin.

[00:09:27] **Speaker 1** Senator Tammy Baldwin, thanks very much.

[00:09:30] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:09:39] **Speaker 1** Thank you. Thank you.

[00:09:41] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Have a great show. The rest of you.

[00:09:44] **Speaker 1** Thank you.

[00:09:47] **Speaker 2** Bye.