**JOHNSON2413.mp3**

[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Thank you very much.

[00:00:02] **Speaker 2** We have come to the rule.

[00:00:05] **Speaker 1** Okay, we're standing by now.

[00:00:08] **Speaker 2** And we are rolling.

[00:00:19] **Speaker 1** Stand by. Even as the shutdown started, Wisconsin Republican U.S. Senator Ron Johnson proposed a bill called Eliminate Shutdowns Act. He's here to explain it. Senator, thanks for being here.

[00:00:39] **Speaker 2** How are you doing?

[00:00:41] **Speaker 1** Good. So you've had it with shutdowns. What does your bill do?

[00:00:47] **Speaker 2** Well, first of all, I will ask you, I think it's pretty obvious, you and your listeners, I mean, aren't you getting sick and tired of this? I've been sick and tire of this for a long time. When I was chairman of Homeland Security, I told my committee, let's pass something to eliminate all shutdowns. And back then, I had a number of different bills to choose from. I chose Maggie Hassan and James Langford's bill, the Preventing Shutdown Act. And we tried to get that passed. We haven't been able to. So this is a slimmed down version that's actually simpler than that. It's just called Eliminate Shutdowns Act. And all it does is if you don't appropriate money for government prior to the beginning of the fiscal year or any department, it doesn't shut down government, doesn't shutdown those departments, it just establishes a rolling 14-day continuing appropriation. So then the appropriators have time to pass an appropriation bill. Again, it really is modeled after what Wisconsin did in the 50s. They're the same thing. It doesn't decrease, it doesn't increase spending. It just keeps the last year's levels until you pass an appropriation. I was disappointed that every Democrat voted against that when we voted on it Monday. But we also had 12 Republican appropriators vote against it because they said it would undercut the appropriation process. But let me just describe that process that would be undercut. I've been here 15 years. 15 appropriation cycles. That means 180 appropriation bills should have been passed before the end of the fiscal year on time. You know how many have been past? Six. But that's a 96.7% failure rate. That's apparently what the Eliminate Shutdown Act would undermine or undercut. Again, it's absurd. Listen, I would love to see an appropriation process work. It doesn't. It's obvious it doesn't, so let's at a minimum stop playing partisan politics with people's lives. I mean, this is highly disruptive to people, and there's no reason for it whatsoever. The House has passed a continuing resolution. All Democrats have to do is do the same thing to end the Schumer shutdown.

[00:02:50] **Speaker 1** So in this shutdown, again, as you've just expressed, you blame Democrats, but why not negotiate it out before it gets to this point?

[00:03:01] **Speaker 2** Well, that's what I try to do. Just let's prevent this. Just pass the Eliminate Shutdown Act, and then we can negotiate whatever needs to be negotiated. You know, individual appropriation bills. There is agreement on many things. For example, the Senate did pass what we call a mini bus. The main part of that was Veterans Affairs and Military Construction. That passed the Senate. I'm not sure what happened in the House. We didn't conference those. It hasn't been signed to law. But there should be plenty of areas of agreement. The problem is, as dysfunctional as this seems, Frederica, this actually is a very well-homed process on the part of the Uniparty, where you don't pass appropriation bills. You put yourself into the shutdown mode. You create deadlines, like right before Thanksgiving or right before Christmas. You know, members want to go home. The appropriators or leadership basically writes a 2,000- page-plus onto the spending mill, drops it on their desks and say, vote for it, you can't go home. That's one of the reasons we've gone from $14 trillion to over $37 trillion in debt since I arrived here in 2011.

[00:04:08] **Speaker 1** Now, you're joining us just before the latest vote on the continuing resolution to fund government. Is there any movement on either side?

[00:04:17] **Speaker 2** It doesn't sound like it. As a matter of fact, it sounds like Democrats are going to make us go through more federal votes just to kind of keep people here for no reason. But no, this would be the third time we're going to be voting on the House Clean Sea hour. And the House passed this over a week ago, which by the way was not an easy lift for Speaker Johnson. I don't like continuing resolutions. A lot of House conservatives don't' like them. But we also don't let government shut down, so we kind of suck it up and we vote for this continuing resolution to get things resolved. So the House pass the continuing resolution. They're on break. You know, we had Jewish holidays and those types of things. So they're on recess. So the only way to open government at this point in time is to pass their relatively clean sea hour, which by the way, this is based on Biden's budget. These are spending levels that Democrats and President Biden agreed to. They voted for them earlier in the year. But we know. Now it's not acceptable.

[00:05:13] **Speaker 1** We know what the Democrats are seeking, and that is an extension of the enhanced tax credits in the Affordable Care Act. You've long opposed the Affordable care Act. I trust you would never vote in favor of extending those enhanced credits.

[00:05:28] **Speaker 2** Well, remember, these were temporary enhanced credits for the pandemic. But there's all kinds of pandemic relief funding that has expired that we're not continuing. Why do we continue these? Plus, this particular enhanced subsidy has provided millions of Americans with zero premium policies. What that has done is created all kinds of fraud, and this is being prosecuted. There's local news reports on this. Individuals without their knowledge are being signed up for insurance policies. The unscrupulous brokers and agents are collecting a commission. The billions of dollars are being sent to insurance carriers who never have to pay a claim on these because people don't even know it. So if you vote to extend these enhancements and continue these zero premium policies, you are voting to continue this. Fraud, this massive fraud. Tens of billions of dollars being paid to insurance companies for policies they pay no claims on. I don't see how anybody could vote for that. Not winning $37 trillion in debt.

[00:06:31] **Speaker 1** As to Medicaid, could you see Republicans backing down on any of the provisions in the big, beautiful bill, including additional requirements around eligibility that critics argue would result in people losing coverage?

[00:06:46] **Speaker 2** Well, first of all, what we did was actually minimal. We're not cutting Medicaid funding. What we're trying to do is eliminate the fraud. We're trying eliminate Medicaid being used by people in this country illegally. Quite honestly, we didn't go far enough. We didn't really address the primary problem with Obamacare, which was the Obamcare expansion on Medicaid, which really incentivizes providers to focus more on single, able-bodied, childless adults over... Disabled children. For every dollar a state puts in for a disabled child, the federal government kicks in $1.33. For every $1 they kick in for an able-bodied, childless adult, we kick in $9, which is allowed... That's resulted in provider fees, provider taxes, which is just basically a scam. It's legalized fraud that now states are basing their budgets off and so are hospitals, but that's not health care. It's further bankrupting America.

[00:07:44] **Speaker 1** What is your response to President Trump seeming to use the shutdown as predicate to cut agency budgets and personnel?

[00:07:55] **Speaker 2** Well, first of all, in the private sector, when your company goes bankrupt, unfortunately people lose their jobs and they have to go find employment elsewhere. Except for the fact that the federal government can extract the fruits of our labors and taxation, this is a bankrupt entity. And so I don't see why public service, public sector employees should be immune to what we all have to experience in the privacy sector. It's unfortunate. It doesn't have to be. Again, Democrats could end this today. In about an hour when we vote on the House continuing resolution, we could reopen government. So there's no sense in them wailing about the fact that maybe President Trump will utilize this opportunity to shrink down the size of government, which by and large I'd be all for. I mean, the federal government is massive, spent $7 trillion this year, 2019, before the pandemic we were spending $4.4, worth $37 trillion in debt. You've got to start trimming this sometime.

[00:08:51] **Speaker 1** We leave it there, Senator Ron Johnson. Thanks very much.

[00:09:03] **Speaker 2** Okay, take care.

[00:09:04] **Speaker 1** Bye, thank you. Have a good vote.