

GOP: Don't use budget maneuver for policy

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Congressional Republicans and some Democrats caution against using the budget process to pass U.S. President Barack Obama's initiatives with a simple majority.

U.S. Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said Monday using budget reconciliation to preclude the need for 60-vote supermajorities "would be a mess," Politico reported Tuesday.

If the reconciliation procedure, which requires a simple majority instead of the 60-vote supermajority needed to prevent filibustering and usually is reserved for non-policy, non-substantive measures, were used, the White House would risk turning the legislation into a "purely partisan exercise," Senate Republican Whip Jon Kyl of Arizona said.

A Senate GOP aide said the party could go "nuclear," essentially shutting down the Senate through procedural moves.

Republicans aren't alone in their outcry, the Washington publication said.

Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., the Senate's longest-serving member, has attempted to round up opposition to the idea of pushing substantive legislation through the budget reconciliation process. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., warned Monday that Democrats could do "serious damage to our bipartisan effort" if they seriously consider putting issues such as healthcare reform in reconciliation.

So far, White House aides haven't tipped their hand on reconciliation, saying all budget scenarios are on the table. During Monday's news briefing, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said that "the debate on reconciliation is months and months and months ahead of itself," adding that Republicans didn't have an issue with reconciliation when they ran the Senate when George Bush was president.

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