

What is Budget Reconciliation?

There have been a few questions regarding how many votes are needed to pass this bill.

1. Normally, the Senate requires a 60-vote majority to pass any legislation—a high bar that makes it hard for the Senate to quickly pass major pieces of legislation. This is intentional. It's supposed to prevent the majority party from jamming legislation through the Senate.
2. Budget Reconciliation, or reconciliation, is a legislative maneuver that allows the majority to bypass this 60-vote process and instead needing 51 votes.
3. Because reconciliation is a budget procedure, originally intended to reduce the deficit, only changes directly impacting government spending or taxes may be included
4. This is known as the Byrd rule, and for example it means the *entire* ACA cannot be repealed through reconciliation, *only* the pieces of the bill that directly impact government finances.
5. Which brings us to the AHCA – Congress is using reconciliation, which means only a simple majority (51 votes) is needed to pass the Senate. If there is a tie (50-50) the Vice President can, and in this case would most likely, break that tie.
6. It's because of the reconciliation and the Byrd rule that the AHCA contains such provisions that alter tax subsidies and cuts and caps Medicaid, and makes it more difficult for the bill to end consumer protections (like the ban on insurance companies denying people with pre-existing conditions or mandating that health insurance covers birth control). If they want to do so, they will need to pass a separate piece of legislation that is subject to the filibuster, or blocking a vote, in the Senate (which would require 60 votes).
7. Despite the bill not directly outlining its attempt to decimate consumer protections (like the ones mentioned above), the House bill clearly intends to remove protections for people with disabilities, women, children, and aging by making it more difficult and expensive to access comprehensive and affordable health coverage.