Out of Options, Congress Prepares for a "Trump Shutdown"

Democrats suggested passing six of the seven outstanding appropriations bills, including an $18 million increase for AIDS housing.

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With only a week remaining for members of Congress to pass seven appropriations bills and avert a partial government shutdown that would furlough hundreds of thousands of workers and potentially disrupt funding for federal programs, Congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle are seemingly out of ideas on how to deal with President Trump and his insistence on $5 billion for his border wall that Democrats are determined not to give him.

"There is no discernable plan," Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) told reporters on Thursday, December 13. "Everybody's looking to [President Trump] for a signal about what he wants to do. So far, it's not clear."

Echoing Senator Cornyn's remarks—albeit with a more partisan tilt—Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) remarked that she had "not heard of any Republican who's sitting down and figuring out how to get this through," adding that "there's no plan."

Going into the start of last week, odds of a deal being passed by Congress and signed into law by the President were slim, but after a contentious and at times bizarre meeting between Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA-12) and President Trump and Vice President Pence, any hope of compromise in the immediate future vanished.

During the meeting, House Minority Leader Pelosi emphasized Democratic Leadership's position that they will not capitulate to Trump's border wall demands and placed the blame for any resulting government shutdown squarely at the President's feet, referring to it as a "Trump shutdown" and repeatedly insisting that Trump and the GOP didn't have the votes to get the $5 billion border wall funding passed in the House. By the end of what was a remarkably awkward meeting in which Vice President Pence sat mute the entire time, Trump had taken ownership of a potential shutdown saying, "I am proud to shut down the government. I will take the mantle."

Given the current circumstances, many in Congress are preparing for a partial government shutdown or another continuing resolution (CR) through Christmas or into the new year. Democrats have suggested passing 6 of the 7 outstanding appropriations bills—including the

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Bill that could contain an $18 million increase in funding for the Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS program—and agreeing to a year-long CR on the Homeland Security appropriations bill, but House Republicans have been unwilling to agree to any bill that doesn't include border wall funding. House Republicans were expected to put forward their own bill with the $5 billion in border wall funding included, but the lack of GOP Representatives in Washington after the demoralizing midterm elections put a stop to those plans.

The House is planning on reconvening on December 19, giving them roughly 3 days to figure out a solution to avoid a partial government shutdown. AIDS United will continue to monitor developments on the remaining 7 spending bills as we close out final days of the 115th Congress.

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