

Trump-Ryan relationship grows more tortured

By ERICA WERNER and JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It started out cold as ice, and then turned warm and friendly. Now the tortured relationship between President Donald Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan has gone cool again, with the Republican president making clear he has no qualms about bucking the GOP leader to cut deals with his Democratic foes.

The two men dined at the White House Thursday night and discussed legislative challenges ahead for the fall, a get-together that was scheduled over Congress' August recess, long before the head-spinning events of this week. In a moment that stunned Washington, Trump cut a debt and disaster aid deal Wednesday with Congress' Democratic leaders as Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell watched on helplessly, after lobbying unsuccessfully for much different terms.

The moment distilled the inherent tensions between Trump, 71, a former Democrat and ideologically flexible deal-maker, and Ryan, 47, a loyal Republican whose discomfort with Trump led him to withhold his endorsement for weeks last year.

After Trump was elected the two papered over their differences and even developed a rapport, talking frequently during health care negotiations earlier this year, as each understood they needed the other to advance individual and shared goals. But their phone calls have tapered off of late and Trump has expressed his frustration with GOP leaders on multiple fronts, culminating in the president's decision to ditch them and join hands with the Democrats instead.

Trump exulted in his newly bipartisan approach Thursday, declaring it "a great thing for our country," while Ryan mostly grinned and bore it.

At the Capitol on Wednesday, Ryan had deemed a three-month debt ceiling increase as "unworkable" and "ridiculous." Yet an hour later, Trump overruled



President Donald Trump pauses during a meeting with Congressional leaders in the Oval Office of the White House, Wednesday in Washington. From left, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, R-Wis., Vice President Mike Pence, Trump, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

his strong objections to side with the Democrats.

The president's rebuff on the debt came just days after Trump ignored Ryan's pleas not to end the program to aid immigrants brought to the country as children and living here illegally. Instead, Trump ended the program and tossed the issue to Congress to resolve in six months.

A spokeswoman for Ryan, AshLee Strong, said Friday that the speaker and Trump "have a good relationship and are in frequent communication as the two work to advance the legislative priorities Republicans promised, including tax reform. In fact, they talked five times this week," including the dinner.

The House on Friday passed the \$15 billion in disaster aid and a three-month government funding extension, sending it to Trump.

Indeed for Ryan, GOP reactions to the deal exposed some lurking threats to his perch atop a conference where unrest brews nearly ceaselessly among conservatives, and there have been recent rumblings of a possible coup.

Trump remains highly popular in the conservative districts occupied by many House Republicans, much more so than Ryan himself, who is scorned by many in the GOP base as an

establishment sell-out. In a whipsawed moment, some House Republicans defended Trump's handling of a deal they don't like, while simultaneously criticizing Ryan, who had been overruled by the president. It also underscored the political pressure on Ryan to try to remain in the president's good graces even when Trump is flirting with Democrats.

Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, said the message in his conservative district is that "congressional Republicans need to get behind the president."

That sentiment "makes him weaker," King said of Ryan.

Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona described Ryan as "very unpopular" in his district, while regard for Trump is "pretty high."

As far as his constituents are concerned, Gosar said, they'd be happy if Ryan got the boot and Trump stayed. "That's kind of the mantra in my district," he said.

For his part, Trump has soured on the Republican congressional leadership in recent months, fuming to associates that they led him astray on their health care strategy, among other complaints.

The president has told those close to him that he regrets choosing to tackle the

repeal and replace of Barack Obama's health care law as his first legislative push. He has singled out Ryan for blame, saying the speaker assured him it would pass and instead handed him an early, humiliating failure, before ultimate House passage of a revived bill, according to three White House and outside advisers familiar with the conversations but not authorized to speak about them publicly.

GOP health care efforts collapsed in the Senate in July.

Trump has spoken to Ryan less frequently in recent weeks, particularly after the departure of his first chief of staff, Reince Priebus, who has deep Wisconsin ties to the speaker. Priebus would sometimes broker the calls and stress to each man their importance, according to two people familiar with the conversations. Those calls have occurred less often since John Kelly took over as chief of staff.

Though Trump has expressed particular anger at McConnell for the failed Senate health care vote and for not protecting him from the Russia investigation, he grudgingly has told associates that he is aware of the Senate leader's grip on power. He has spoken less glowingly about Ryan's



House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of Calif., accompanied by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of N.Y., speaks with DREAMERS who are holding a 4-day fast on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday.

Deal with Trump has Democrats riding higher

WASHINGTON (AP) — Relegated for months to playing defense, congressional Democrats are rising again. They've been revitalized by the deal their leaders cut with President Donald Trump this week and by a trickle of GOP retirements that have boosted their hopes of capturing House control next year.

It's unlikely the startling agreement between Trump and top Democrats on increasing the federal debt limit, which surprised and undermined Republicans, augurs an era of broad bipartisan cooperation. Trump has shown no clear governing philosophy, can abruptly shift views and still favors policies Democrats abhor like erasing the Obama health care law. Many Democrats find it hard to even contemplate working with him.

For now, however, Trump's agreement with Senate Minority Leader

Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to extend the government's borrowing authority and keep agencies open for three months gives the Democrats plenty of clout. When Congress revisits those must-pass issues in December, Trump and GOP leaders will need Democratic votes, opening the door to possible Republican concessions on protecting young immigrants from deportation, bolstering President Barack Obama's health care statute and other issues.

The House sent Trump the legislation Friday — which he quickly signed — with the three-month extension plus \$15 billion in aid for victims of Hurricane Harvey. In the 316-90 result, all 90 "no" votes came from the chamber's 240 Republicans, underscoring the likelihood Trump will need Democrats in December.

own ability to lead due to the shorter House terms and the growing insurgency within the conservative Freedom Caucus.

Ryan's position is seen as secure for now, if only because it is widely accepted that no other House Republican could garner the support needed to replace him. But even allies believe his tenure

in the job could be finite, and might depend in part on the whims of a president with whom he has no real deep ties.

"I think any speaker is going to have a very difficult time in this environment," said Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y. "The nature of that job, I think, over time, they don't last."

Equifax data breach sows chaos among 143 million Americans

By KEN SWEET
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK — A day after credit-reporting company Equifax disclosed that "criminals" had stolen vital data about 143 million Americans, it had somehow managed to leave much of the public in the dark about their exposure, how they should protect themselves and what Equifax planned to do for those affected.

The breach is unquestionably serious. It exposed crucial pieces of personal data that criminals could use to commit identity theft, from Social Security numbers and birthdates to address histories and legal names.

That data — the "crown jewels" of personal infor-

mation," in the words of independent credit analysts John Ulzheimer — can't be changed, and once it's in circulation, it's basically out there forever.

But Equifax's response has satisfied almost no one.

Unhappiness everywhere
Consumers complained of jammed phone lines and uninformed representatives. An Equifax website set up to help people determine their exposure looked like a scam to some, and provided inconsistent and unhelpful information to others. Congress planned hearings.

Anders Ohlsson, a 47-year-old technical manager in Scotts Valley, California, called a hotline multiple times and was disconnected; entered the last six digits of his Social

Security number into Equifax's emergency website; and finally spoke with a call center manager. He still doesn't know whether his information has been compromised.

"I don't think I've gotten hold of a person that actually cares," he said. "Now they're fumbling to tell people what's going on. But they really don't know what's going on."

Equifax plays a key role in the financial industry, making this breach more alarming than previous ones at Yahoo or retailers. It's a storehouse of personal information, like how much people owe on their houses and whether they have court judgments against them.

Lenders rely on the information collected by

three big credit bureaus — Equifax, TransUnion and Experian — to help them decide on financing for homes, cars and credit cards. Credit checks are sometimes done by employers when deciding whom to hire for a job.

What you can do

Even if you don't know if you're one of the 143 million, you might want to consider extreme protective measures.

Your strongest immediate option involves placing a credit freeze on their files with the major credit bureaus. That locks down your information, making it impossible for outsiders to open new accounts and bank cards in your name. But it also blocks you from opening new accounts,

and might involve fees depending on the state you live in.

"The credit freeze is the nuclear option of credit protection," said Matt Schulz, an analyst with CreditCards.com. "But in the wake of a breach this big, it's worth considering."

You should also be more diligent about checking your credit reports, where you can see if anyone has opened unauthorized accounts in your name. You can get those files for free once a year from the three major bureaus; use the official site, annualcreditreport.com.

It's best to spread those requests out by getting one every four months. And you'll need to be ready to keep checking for a while — potentially years.

"Bad guys can be very patient with data," Schulz said.

If you're not ready for the freeze, Ulzheimer recommends setting up fraud alerts on your files. These force creditors to contact you directly, usually by phone, for approval before approving an account.

And if you've been a victim of repeated identity fraud, you can request a new Social Security number with the Social Security Administration.

In addition to the emergency Equifax website, <https://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com/>, you can also call 866-447-7559 for information. The company also says it will send mail to all who had personally identifiable information stolen.

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