

House votes to avert federal shutdown, Senate chances dim

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided House on Thursday passed an eleventh-hour plan to keep the government running. But the GOP-written measure faced gloomy prospects in the Senate, and it remained unclear whether lawmakers would be able to find a way to keep federal offices open past a Friday night deadline.

The House voted by a near party-line 230-197 vote to approve the legislation, which would keep agency doors open and hundreds of thousands of federal employees at work through Feb. 16. The measure is designed to give White House and congressional bargainers more time to work through disputes on immigration and the budget that they've tangled over for months.

House passage was assured after the House Freedom Caucus reached an accord with House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. The leader of the hard-right group, Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., said Ryan promised future votes on extra defense spending and on a conservative, restrictive immigration bill, though a source familiar with the discussion said Ryan didn't guarantee an immigration vote. That person was not authorized to speak publicly about the private negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Just 11 Republicans, mostly conservatives and a pair of moderate Hispanic lawmakers, opposed the measure. Six Democrats, a mix of Hispanic and moderate legislators, backed the bill.

But most Senate Democrats and



House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis., center, accompanied by his Press Secretary AshLee Strong, right, walks to the Capitol Building Thursday in Washington.

some Republicans were expected to vote no in that chamber, probably Friday. Democrats were hoping to spur slow-moving talks on protecting young immigrants who arrived in the U.S. illegally from deportation. A handful of Republicans, including Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., were pressing for swifter action on immigration and a long-sought Pentagon spending boost.

Senate rejection would leave the pathway ahead uncertain with only one guarantee: finger-pointing by both parties, which began as that chamber debated the measure.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell, R-Ky., accused Democrats of a "fixation on illegal immigration," which he said "has them threatening to filibuster spending for the whole government."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., who's tried using opposition to the bill as leverage to prod immigration negotiations, called for a plan to finance government for just a few days, and said party leaders should try to quickly reach an agreement. He said that should be done with or without President Donald Trump, who initially expressed support for a bipartisan effort to address the issue, only to oppose one proposed

by several senators.

"How can you negotiate with the president, who has to sign the legislation, is like a sphinx on this issue, or says one thing one day and one thing the next?" Schumer asked.

The GOP controls the Senate 51-49 and will need substantial Democratic backing to reach 60 — the number needed to end Democratic delaying tactics. Republicans were all but daring Democrats to scuttle the bill and force a shutdown because of immigration, which they said would hurt Democratic senators seeking re-election in 10 states that Trump carried in 2016.

"Senator Schumer, do not shut down the federal government," said Ryan, adding, "It is risky. It is reckless. And it is wrong."

Underscoring the political stakes, McConnell warned GOP senators in an email obtained by The Associated Press that voting against the measure "plays right into Democrats hand" — presumably because it would dilute the argument that Democrats killed the legislation.

Democrats said voters would fault Republicans because they control Congress and the White House. They also noted that Trump rejected a proposed bipartisan deal among a handful of senators that would have resolved the conflict over how to protect hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation.

"You have the leverage. Get this done," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California said

about Republicans.

Trump himself weighed in from Pennsylvania, where he flew to help a GOP candidate in a special congressional election.

"I really believe the Democrats want a shutdown to get off the subject of the tax cuts because they're doing so well," he said.

Shadowing everything is this November's elections. Trump's historically poor popularity and a string of Democratic special election victories have fueled that party's hopes of capturing control of the House and perhaps the Senate.

As he's done since taking office a year ago, Trump was dominating and confusing the jousting, at times to the detriment of his own party. He tweeted that the month-long funding measure should not contain money for a children's health insurance program — funds his administration has expressly supported — then the White House quickly said he indeed supports the legislation.

Congress must act by midnight Friday or the government will begin immediately locking its doors. Though the impact would initially be spotty — since most agencies would be closed until Monday — the story would be certain to dominate weekend news coverage, and each party would be gambling the public would blame the other.

In the event of a shutdown, food inspections and other vital services would continue, as would Social Security and most military operations.

BRIEFLY

Russia probes come up against claims of executive privilege

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House and lawmakers haggled Thursday over what former chief strategist Steve Bannon and other top aides to President Donald Trump can tell Congress as it investigates possible connections with Russia.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have been critical of the White House's sweeping interpretation of executive privilege and its contention that pretty much everything is off limits until the president says it's not.

Bannon had been subpoenaed to return to the House Intelligence Committee on Thursday to face additional questions about his interactions with the president, but documents obtained by The Associated Press show he now has until the week of Jan. 29. The committee gave him more time to "clarify the White House's instructions" regarding what he can tell lawmakers, the documents show.

The postponement of Bannon's interview came after his attorney, Bill Burck, sent a letter to the committee, arguing that it had failed to give him proper time to respond or review documents the committee may want to ask him

about. According to the letter, obtained by the AP, the committee asked Burck to work with the White House to define the scope of the "privilege the President may wish to assert" over Bannon.

Ex-Trump aide was subject of warrant at White House

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungarian police had an arrest warrant open for Sebastian Gorka during the eight months he spent as a national security aide to U.S. President Donald Trump.

The warrant issued in September 2016 is for unspecified

weapons or ammunitions charges. It remained posted Thursday on the website of Hungary's national police.

The British-born Gorka has Hungarian heritage and lived in Hungary for years starting in the early 1990s. He worked for Hungary's defense ministry during 1993-1998 and tried to establish a radical right-wing party in Hungary, the New Democratic Coalition, in 2007.

That he was wanted by Hungarian law enforcement while working for the White House appears to have escaped public notice before it was first reported Thursday by Hungary's 444.hu website, based on a reader's tip.

Reacting to reports saying the warrant might have stemmed from charges possibly filed in 2009, Gorka tweeted: "I moved to America in 2008. (LEGALLY!)"

Hungarian police have not released any details about why the warrant was obtained and has languished so long.

Gorka joined the Trump administration as a counterterrorism adviser.

But his exact responsibilities were not clearly outlined, and he was unable to get clearance for the National Security Council because of a January 2016 charge for carrying a weapon at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON & EVENING

Table with columns for time slots (12 PM, 12:30, 1 PM, 1:30, 2 PM, 2:30, 3 PM, 3:30, 4 PM, 4:30, 5 PM, 5:30, 6 PM, 6:30, 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.) listing programs.

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FRIDAY LATE NIGHT & SATURDAY MORNING

Table with columns for time slots (12 AM, 12:30, 1 AM, 1:30, 2 AM, 2:30, 3 AM, 3:30, 4 AM, 4:30, 5 AM, 5:30, 6 AM, 6:30, 7 AM, 7:30, 8 AM, 8:30, 9 AM, 9:30, 10 AM, 10:30, 11 AM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS) listing programs.