

Trump's demand for wall moves government closer to shutdown

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's demand for border wall funds hurled the federal government closer to a shutdown as House Republicans approved a package Thursday with his \$5.7 billion request that is almost certain to be rejected by the Senate.

The White House said Trump will not travel to Florida on Friday for the Christmas holiday if the government is shutting down. More than 800,000 federal workers will be facing furloughs or forced to work without pay if a resolution is not reached before funding expires at midnight Friday.

The shutdown crisis could be one of the final acts of the House GOP majority before relinquishing control to Democrats in January. Congress had been on track to fund the government but lurched Thursday when Trump, after a rare lashing from conservative supporters, declared he would not sign a bill without the funding. Conservatives want to keep fighting. They warn that "caving" on Trump's repeated wall promises could hurt his 2020 re-election chances, and other Republicans' as well.

The House voted largely along party lines, 217-185, after GOP leaders framed the vote as a slap-back to Nancy Pelosi, who is poised to become House speaker on Jan. 3 and who had warned Trump in a televised Oval Office meeting last week that he wouldn't have the votes for the wall.

"Now we find compromise," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said. "We have time right now to get it done."

Meanwhile, an online fundraiser started by an Air Force veteran to pay for construction of President Donald Trump's U.S.-Mexico border wall was up to millions of dollars Thursday.

Brian Kolfage launched



Speaker of the House Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., left, and House Majority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., walk off after speaking to reporters after meeting with President Donald Trump on border wall funding at the White House on Thursday in Washington.

AP Photo/Evan Vucci

the GoFundMe page Sunday, and it has since generated \$6 million in donations. The site states a fundraising goal of \$1 billion.

In a statement posted on the crowdsourcing page, Kolfage says the wall could be built if everyone who voted for Trump pledged \$80 each.

Kushners buying 4th New Jersey property in tax-break zone

NEW YORK (AP) — Jared Kushner's family company is buying another property in a New Jersey beach town where developers can get big tax breaks thanks to a new federal program pushed by Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump.

The Kushner Cos. is negotiating to buy land already approved for retail space and apartments in one of thousands of new Opportunity Zones offering tax breaks around the country, Long Branch Business Administrator George Jackson said Thursday. It would be the fourth Kushner purchase in an Opportunity Zone in the town since the Republican-led tax overhaul law passed in December last year.

The program has been praised as a smart way to attract money into high-poverty areas long neglected by private investors. But crit-

ics say it includes too many gentrifying neighborhoods already attracting investment and is a giveaway to wealthy developers.

The Kushner Cos. did not respond to repeated requests for comment. An earlier report in the *Asbury Park Press* on the deal quotes a

Kushner spokeswoman saying the purchase is "under contract."

News of the possible purchase follows an Associated Press investigation that showed Jared Kushner owns stakes in 13 Opportunity Zones properties, all in locations deemed by the

Urban Institute in Washington to be showing indications of rapid change or full-out gentrification, including ones in Long Branch. Six of properties are in New York City's Brooklyn Heights neighborhood overlooking the Manhattan skyline and where apartments sell for millions each.

Whitaker rejected advice to recuse himself from Russia probe

WASHINGTON (AP) — Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker chose not to recuse himself from the Russia investigation even though a top Justice Department ethics official advised him to step aside out of an "abundance of caution," a senior official said Thursday.

Whitaker's past criticism of the Russia investi-

gation has raised questions about whether he can oversee it fairly. The ethics official said this week that a recusal was "a close call" but suggested that Whitaker remove himself, even though he was not required to do so.

Whitaker decided not to take the advice.

Earlier Thursday, a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it publicly told The Associated Press that Whitaker did not have to recuse himself from overseeing the probe. But that wasn't the full picture. Later, a senior Justice Department official provided a much more detailed account of the ethics consultation.

It showed that although Whitaker was not required to step aside from the investigation, the issue wasn't so clear cut. That official spoke with reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive conversations.



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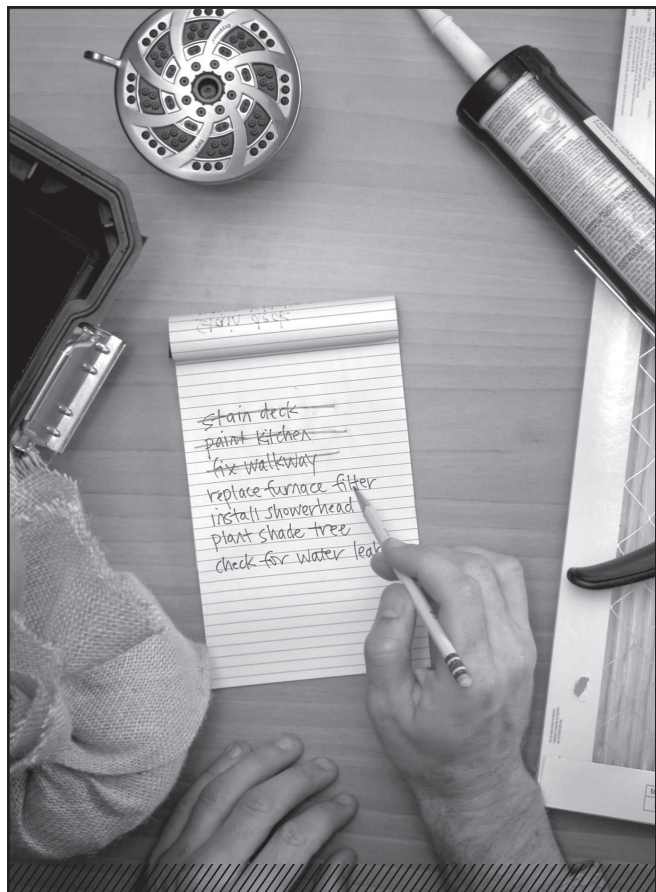
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