

Congress leaders invited to White House for border briefing

By ZEKE MILLER AND LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Tuesday invited congressional leaders to a White House briefing on border security as the partial government shutdown dragged on over funding for a border wall, with Trump tweeting, “Let’s make a deal?”

The briefing would happen Wednesday, the day before the Democrats take control of the House, but the exact agenda wasn’t immediately clear, according to a person with knowledge of the briefing who was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Republican leaders will be attending. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as the top incoming House Republicans, Kevin McCarthy of California and Steve Scalise of Louisiana, are planning to be at the briefing, according to aides. Retiring Speaker Paul Ryan will not.

Nancy Pelosi, who is expected to take over as House speaker, and top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer are also expected to attend but were awaiting more details. Pelosi said Democrats would take action to “end the Trump Shutdown” by passing legislation Thursday to reopen government.

“We are giving the Republicans the opportunity to take yes for an answer,” Pelosi wrote in a letter to colleagues late Tuesday. “Senate Republicans have already supported this legislation, and if they reject it now, they will be fully complicit in chaos and destruction of the President’s third shutdown of his term.”

The White House invitation comes after House Democrats released their plan to re-open the government without approving money for a border wall — unveiling two bills to fund shuttered government agencies and put hundreds of thousands of federal workers back on the job. They planned to pass them as soon as the new Congress convenes Thursday.

Trump spent the weekend saying Democrats should return to Washington to negotiate, firing off Twitter taunts. He then revised his aides’ comments to state that he really still wants to build a border wall.

On Tuesday morning, after tweeting a New Year’s message to “EVERYONE INCLUDING THE HATERS AND THE FAKE NEWS MEDIA,” Trump tweeted: “The Democrats, much as I suspected, have allocated no money for a new Wall. So imaginative! The problem is, without a Wall there can be no real Border Security.”

But he seemed to shift tactics later in the day,



AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana

A closed sign is displayed at The National Archives entrance in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, as a partial government shutdown stretches into its third week.

appealing to Pelosi. “Border Security and the Wall ‘thing’ and Shutdown is not where Nancy Pelosi wanted to start her tenure as Speaker! Let’s make a deal?” he tweeted.

Whether the Republican-led Senate, under McConnell, would consider the Democratic bills — or if Trump would sign either into law — was unclear. McConnell spokesman Donald Stewart said Senate Republicans would not take action without Trump’s backing.

“It’s simple: The Senate is not going to send something to the president that he won’t sign,” Stewart said.

Even if only symbolic, the passage of the bills in the House would put fresh pressure on the president.

At the same time, administration officials said Trump was in no rush for a resolution to the impasse.

Trump believes he has public opinion on his side and, at very least, his base of supporters behind him, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

White House officials, including the departing chief of staff, had indicated that Trump’s signature campaign pledge to build the wall would not be fulfilled as advertised. Chief of staff John Kelly told the *Los Angeles Times* in an interview published Sunday that Trump abandoned the notion of “a solid concrete wall early on in the

administration.”

The Democratic package to end the shutdown would include one bill to temporarily fund the Department of Homeland Security at current levels — with \$1.3 billion for border security, far less than the \$5 billion Trump has said he wants for the wall — through Feb. 8 as talks continued.

It would also include another measure to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown. It would provide money through the remainder of the fiscal year, to Sept. 30.

Democrats under Pelosi were all but certain to swiftly approve the package

in two separate votes Thursday. They would take place after the election of a new House speaker, a contest Pelosi was expected to win as leader of the new House majority.

The White House did not respond to multiple requests for comment on the House proposal. Republican senators left for the holidays refusing to vote on any bills until all sides, including Trump, were in agreement. The lawmakers were frustrated that Trump had dismissed their earlier legislation.

The president has not said he would veto the Democratic legislation, if the bills were to land on his desk. But a prolonged crisis could hobble House Democrats’ ability to proceed with their agenda, which includes investigations of the president and oversight of his administration, including Russian interference in the 2016 election.

At least one Republican, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, encouraged Trump to use the budget impasse as an opportunity to address issues beyond the border wall. But a previous attempt to reach a compromise that addressed the status of “Dreamers” — young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children — broke down last year as a result of escalating White House demands. Graham said Trump was “open minded” about his proposal.

MORE WINNERS. MORE OFTEN.

\$80,000
CASE OF CASH GIVEAWAY
3 GRAND PRIZE WINNERS
will choose a case filled with cash!
Cash Drawings Every 30 Minutes • Thursday - Sunday February 2 & March 2, 9pm

GAME DAY
Hot Seats
WIN \$100
BEFORE THE BIG GAME!
4 WINNERS EVERY HOUR
(2-slots & 2-Table Games)
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 10AM - 3PM

CASINO • HOTEL • GOLF • CINEPLEX • RV • MUSEUM • DINING • TRAVEL PLAZA
800.654.9453 • PENDLETON, OR • I-84, EXIT 216, wildhorseresort.com. Owned and operated by CTUIR
Management reserves all rights to alter, suspend or withdraw promotions/offers at any time.

WILDHORSE
RESORT & CASINO