

# Trump stalks out of shutdown session with Dems

White House tries to hold jittery GOP in line

By CATHERINE LUCEY, LISA MASCARO AND LAURIE KELLMAN  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump stalked out of his negotiating meeting with congressional leaders on Wednesday — “I said bye-bye,” he tweeted soon after — as efforts to end the 19-day partial government shutdown fell into deeper disarray over his demand for billions of dollars to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. Hundreds of thousands of federal workers now face lost paychecks on Friday.

The president is to visit the border in person on Thursday, but he has expressed his own doubts that his appearance and remarks will change any minds.

The brief session in the White House Situation Room ended almost as soon as it began.

Democrats said they asked Trump to reopen the government but he told them if he did they wouldn’t give him money for the wall that has been his signature promise since his presidential campaign two years ago.

Republicans said Trump posed a direct question to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi: If he opened the government would she fund the wall? She said no.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Trump slammed his hand on the table and walked out. Republicans said Trump, who passed out candy at the start of the meeting, did not raise his voice and there was



President Donald Trump waves to members of the media as he arrives for a Senate Republican Policy lunch on Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

no table pounding.

One result was certain: The shutdown plunged into new territory with no endgame in sight. The Democrats see the idea of the long, impenetrable wall as ineffective and even immoral, a terrible use of the \$5.7 billion Trump is asking. He sees it as an absolute necessity to stop what he calls a crisis of illegal immigration, drug-smuggling and human trafficking at the border.

“The president made clear today that he is going to stand firm to achieve his priorities to build a wall — a steel barrier — at the southern border,” Vice President Mike Pence told reporters afterward.

That insistence and Trump’s walking out were “really, really unfortunate,” said Schumer.

Trump had just returned from Capitol Hill where he urged jittery congressional Republicans to hold firm with him. He suggested a deal for his border

wall might be getting closer, but he also said the shutdown would last “whatever it takes.”

He discussed the possibility of a sweeping immigration compromise with Democrats to protect some immigrants from deportation but provided no clear strategy or timeline for resolving the standoff, according to senators in the private session. He left the Republican lunch boasting of “a very, very unified party,” but GOP senators are publicly uneasy as the standoff ripples across the lives of Americans and interrupts the economy.

Trump insisted at the White House “I didn’t want this fight.” But it was his sudden rejection of a bipartisan spending bill late last month that blindsided leaders in Congress, including Republican allies, now seeking a resolution to the shutdown.

GOP unity was being tested further late Wednesday

with the House voting on a bipartisan bill to reopen one shuttered department, Treasury, to ensure that tax refunds and other financial services continue. Republicans were expected to join Democrats in voting, defying the plea to stay with the White House.

Ahead of his visit to Capitol Hill, Trump renewed his notice that he might declare a national emergency and try to authorize the wall on his own if Congress won’t approve the money he’s asking.

“I think we might work a deal, and if we don’t I might go that route,” he said.

There’s growing concern about the toll the shutdown is taking on everyday Americans, including disruptions in payments to farmers and trouble for home buyers who are seeking government-backed mortgage loans — “serious stuff,” according to Sen. John Thune, the No. 2 Senate Republican.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, was among several senators who questioned Trump at the Capitol. “I addressed the things that are very local to us — it’s not just those who don’t receive a federal paycheck perhaps on Friday but there are other consequences,” she said, mentioning the inability to certify weight scales for selling fish. The president’s response? “He urged unity.”

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said “the president thinks there will be increasing pressure on everybody to come to the table once people start missing their paycheck.”

Earlier, Cornyn called the standoff “completely unnecessary and contrived. People expect their government to work. ... This obviously is not working.”

Like other Republicans, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia said she wants border security. But she said there was “no way” the shutdown fight would drag on for years as Trump warned last week.

“I think certainly I have expressed more than a few times the frustrations with a government shutdown and how useless it is,” Capito said Tuesday. “That pressure is going to build.”

Democrats said before the White House meeting that they would ask Trump to accept an earlier bipartisan bill that had money for border security but not the wall. Pelosi warned that the effects of hundreds of thousands of lost paychecks would begin to ripple across the economy.

“The president could end the Trump shutdown and reopen the government today, and he should,” Pelosi said.

But the meeting breakup put an end to that idea.

Tuesday night, speaking to the nation from the Oval Office for the first time, Trump argued that the wall was needed to resolve a security and humanitarian “crisis.” He blamed illegal immigration for what he said was a scourge of drugs and violence in the U.S. and asked: “How much more American blood must we shed before Congress does its job?”

Democrats in response accused Trump appealing to “fear, not facts” and manufacturing a border crisis for political gain.

A growing number of Republicans are uncomfortable with the toll the partial shutdown is taking, and Trump’s response to it. They are particularly concerned about the administration’s talk of possibly declaring a national emergency at the border, seeing that as an unprecedented claim on the right of Congress to allocate funding except in the most dire circumstances.

“I prefer that we get this resolved the old-fashioned way,” Thune said.

Trump did not mention the idea of a national emergency declaration Tuesday night. A person unauthorized to discuss the situation said additional “creative options” were being considered, including shifting money from other accounts or tapping other executive authorities for the wall.

Trump on Wednesday floated ideas that have been circulated for a broader immigration overhaul. Trump ally Sen. Lindsey Graham has suggested a compromise that would include wall funding as well as protecting some immigrants from deportation.

## Trump, California spar over money for wildfire funds

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE  
*Associated Press*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — President Donald Trump threatened Wednesday to withhold money to help California cope with wildfires, a day after new Gov. Gavin Newsom asked him to double the federal investment in forest management.

Trump again suggested poor forest management is to blame for California’s deadly wildfires and said he’s ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency to stop giving the state money “unless they get their act together.”

Fire scientists say climate change, not poor forest management, is the driving contributor to California’s increasingly destructive wildfires, many of which have not been in forests.

FEMA could not immediately comment because of the government shutdown. Trump has previously threatened to withhold wildfire payments but never followed through.

Newsom, a Democrat who took office Monday, said Californians affected by wildfires “should not be victims to partisan bickering.”

Trump’s tweet came a day after Newsom and



Gov. Gavin Newsom, left, is escorted by Thom Porter, right, to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection CalFire Colfax Station on Tuesday in Colfax, Calif.

Govs. Jay Inslee and Kate Brown of Washington and Oregon, respectively, sent a letter to the president asking him to double federal funding for forest management.

Newsom noted that California has pledged \$1 billion over the next five years to ramp up its efforts, which include clearing dead trees that can serve as fuel.

Lawmakers approved that money last year, and Newsom said Tuesday he’ll add an extra \$105 million in his upcoming budget for new firefighting equipment, better emergency communications and other improvements.

More than half of Cali-

fornia’s 33 million acres of forest are managed by the federal government, and the letter noted the U.S. Forest Service’s budget has steadily decreased since 2016. State and local governments own just 3 percent of forests and the rest is owned by private owners and Native American tribes, according to the University of California.

“Our significant state-level efforts will not be as effective without a similar commitment to increased wildland management by you, our federal partners,” the letter read.

Newsom’s office didn’t immediately respond to

requests for comment about how much money the state has received from FEMA following recent wildfires.

Most FEMA money goes directly to victims through disaster assistance. The agency approved more than \$48 million in individual and household assistance related to deadly wildfires in November, according to its website.

In a Tuesday event on wildfire safety, Newsom had praised Trump for always providing California with necessary disaster relief funds.

In November, the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century leveled the California town of Paradise, killing 86 people and destroying about 14,000 homes.

Trump toured the fire devastation with Newsom, who defended a head-scratching comment by Trump about Finland minimizing its wildfire threat by “raking and cleaning” forests.

Finland’s president said he had talked to Trump about wildfires in November but didn’t recall discussing raking.

“I’ll defend him on that a little bit,” Newsom said at the time. “I think what he was talking about is defensible spaces, landscaping, which has a role to play.”

## Rosenstein, a frequent Trump target, will leave Justice Dept

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, the most visible Justice Department protector of special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation and a frequent target of President Donald Trump’s wrath, is expected to leave his position soon after Trump’s nominee for attorney general is confirmed.

The departure creates uncertainty about the oversight of Mueller’s team as it enters what may be its final months of work. But the attorney general nominee, William Barr, moved quickly Wednesday to quell concerns that his arrival could endanger the probe, telling lawmakers during Capitol Hill visits ahead of

his confirmation hearing that he has a high opinion of Mueller.

“He had absolutely no indication he was going to tell Bob Mueller what to do or how to do it,” said Republican Sen. Lindsey

Graham, the incoming chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will question Barr next Tuesday.

If confirmed by the Republican-led Senate, Barr could

be in place at the Justice Department by February. Rosenstein is expected to leave his position soon after that, though he is not being forced out, said a person familiar with the plans who was not authorized to discuss them on the record and spoke on condition of anonymity to The Associated Press.



Rod Rosenstein



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