



Democrats in the Senate Block GOP Government Funding Bill

Senate lawmakers teamed up on Thursday to stop a GOP-led effort to cut Planned Parenthood's funding. The vote on the legislation was 47-52 (eight of which were pro-abortion Republican votes), short of the necessary 60 votes to overcome a Democratic filibuster. One Democrat joined the Republicans to advance the bill. Though disappointing for Republicans, the failed vote was widely expected.



Congress has until September 30 to pass a spending bill in order to avoid a government shutdown on October 1. The debate surrounding the bill has been contentious, as a number of lawmakers have called for an end to the funding of Planned Parenthood after undercover videos revealed its illegal and barbaric practice of harvesting and selling fetal organs. Democrats, meanwhile, are refusing to approve a bill that does not remove the spending limits known as the sequester.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell filed a motion to advance Thursday's legislation that would have directed Planned Parenthood's funding to community health centers and funded the government through December 11. It would have maintained the \$1.017-trillion sequestration spending cap for 2016, *The Hill* reports, and extended the Internet Tax Freedom Act, the E-Verify program, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

McConnell expected the bill to fail, and is prepared for the next step, which is debate on a "clean" continuing resolution that will not include provisions to cut Planned Parenthood's funding. A vote on the bill is scheduled for Monday.

The *Washington Post* reports that the clean bill will "likely receive significant support from Senate Republicans," as many have already indicated they would pursue investigations against Planned Parenthood separately.

A number of Republicans have already pledged support for a clean spending bill. "I'd rather it defund Planned Parenthood, but if the votes aren't there, I don't see the point of having a standoff," said Senator Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), chairman of the Senate GOP's campaign committee.

"The House is going to figure out what the House is going to do but we can't shut down the government," declared Alaska Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski.

But others remain steadfast. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) wrote on Twitter, "On the upcoming CR, we should fund the entire federal government, but we should decline to fund Planned Parenthood."

Cruz also took to *Politico*, writing an op-ed in which he criticized Republican leaders. "The leadership loves show votes," he said. "The alternative? We actually do what we said we'd do. We fight for common sense, conservative principles."

According to the Associated Press, Thursday's Senate vote, and the next expected vote on the clean Continuing Resolution, are sure to put pressure on the House, where more conservative Republicans



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 25, 2015

have threatened to vote against any measure that does not defund Planned Parenthood.

Lending to the drama is House Speaker John Boehner's surprise announcement that he will resign from the House at the end of October. The news came as conservatives in the House threatened to oust him as speaker if the Continuing Resolution maintained Planned Parenthood's funding. Lawmakers had already reached out to Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy as a potential successor to the speaker prior to Boehner's announcement. Fox News reports that McCarthy was informed of Boehner's decision just "one minute" before Boehner told the GOP conference.

Referencing the internal turmoil in the House, a Boehner aide explained the speaker's decision:

Speaker Boehner believes that the first job of any Speaker is to protect this institution and, as we saw yesterday with the Holy Father, it is the one thing that unites and inspires us all. ... The Speaker believes putting members through prolonged leadership turmoil would do irreparable damage to the institution.

He is proud of what this majority has accomplished, and his speakership, but for the good of the Republican Conference and the institution, he will resign the speakership and his seat in Congress, effective October 30.

The House must now hold an election to select a new speaker. Until then, Boehner and the House must decide how to proceed on the government funding bill.



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