



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 23, 2015

Government Shutdown Threats Looming, Senate to Vote on Spending Bill

President Obama's refusal to cooperate with Congress has compelled Republicans to take matters into their own hands to avoid a government shutdown. Unfortunately for Republican leaders, these efforts are placing them at odds with their conservative colleagues. And while it may be politically savvy for Democrats to hold Republicans over a barrel or let them take the fall for the resulting government shutdown, creating a proverbial rock or hard place dilemma for the GOP, it is once again a loss for the American people and a win for the Obama administration.



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

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With the House out of session until Thursday, and with House Speaker John Boehner focused on hosting the pope's speech to a joint session of Congress upon the House's return, the Senate is being pressured to take the lead on a government funding measure.

The Hill reports that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has filed a motion to advance legislation that would redirect Planned Parenthood funding to community health centers and fund the government through December 11. Roll Call observes that the procedural step sets up a first vote to break a Democrat-led filibuster.

"For one year, it would defund Planned Parenthood and protect women's health by funding community health clinics with that \$235 million instead," McConnell said in a floor statement. "This would allow us to press the 'pause' button as we investigate the serious scandal surrounding Planned Parenthood."

The spending resolution was introduced by Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-Miss.). It maintains the \$1.017 trillion sequestration spending cap for 2016, *The Hill* reports, includes \$74.7 billion for overseas contingency operations, and extends the Internet Tax Freedom Act, the E-Verify program, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Senator John Thune of South Dakota indicated that the GOP is aware the motion will fail, but is intended to give the House an indication of the Senate's position. Thune said a "clean" spending bill, devoid of riders, would come up immediately after that vote fails on Thursday. That so-called clean bill is expected to pass.



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“And then we’ll go to plan B, and I don’t know at that point whether that means the Senate would lead or the House would lead,” Thune said.

McConnell stated that the first bill is the best option as it continues to protect women’s health, keeps the government funded, and holds off on funding the scandal-ridden Planned Parenthood until a proper investigation has taken place. McConnell also acknowledges that any bill defunding Planned Parenthood would be vetoed by Obama.

The *Washington Post* reports that the clean bill will “likely receive significant support from Senate Republicans, many of whom still plan to pursue investigations against Planned Parenthood in the future outside of the funding debate.”

GOP leaders maintain concerns that the more conservative members of Congress will put forward procedural objections to a spending bill that continues to fund Planned Parenthood.

Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), for example, has stated that he believes the GOP should “stand for principle and not capitulate to President Obama.”

Republican Senator Rand Paul (Ky.) has made similar assertions, asserting that he opposes any effort to pass a spending resolution, and instead wants to see a federal budget broken down and voted on piece by piece. In doing so, controversial items such as funding for Planned Parenthood would require 60 votes to pass.

“I won’t vote for anything that’s got Planned Parenthood money in it and I won’t for a [continuing resolution] because it’s a continuation of the problem,” he said. “I’m not voting for any CR because it’s bad government.”

Representative Walter Jones (R-N.C.), another conservative, stated that he was not going to allow threats of a shutdown to force him to betray his values. “I’ve seen too many times up here that a threat of a shutdown is why you compromise your principles, and I am sick and tired of compromising my principles,” he said.

Senator Cruz contends that it should be the Democrats who are blamed for a government shutdown, similar to an argument he advanced two years ago when the government shut down for 16 days over ObamaCare.

Representative Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.) also asserted that in the event of a shutdown, the blame rests entirely with the Democrats and the president, who are keener on paying the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood than America’s troops. “Will the president shut down and defund the troops in order to fund Planned Parenthood?” said Huelskamp. “I don’t think he’s that politically stupid, but we shall see.”

The Obama administration has unfortunately hijacked the narrative so that any blame for a government shutdown rests solely on the GOP’s shoulders. Nevermind that the Democrats and the president appear more concerned about ensuring that the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood receives funding than the military or that the federal government’s [exorbitant spending](#) is going to create an economic crisis in the United States from which we may never fully recover.

And some Republican lawmakers are playing right into Democrats’ hands by simply announcing a willingness to compromise their principles to avoid a shutdown, rather than insisting that any potential shutdown is a result of the Democrats’ unwillingness to compromise.

Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), for example, said he would vote to keep the government operating even if it means allowing Planned Parenthood to receive federal funding.



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House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.) said the House will be ready to “act quickly” to avoid a shutdown. “The most important thing is that we keep the government open for business so that we provide stability to our economy and continue vital federal programs on which all Americans rely,” he said. “I am pleased that there is forward legislative momentum in the Senate to avoid a government shutdown.”

Meanwhile, *The Hill* reports that the dispute over funding Planned Parenthood to avoid a shutdown could result in John Boehner’s ousting. Republicans reportedly have already reached out to Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy as a potential successor to Boehner.

At the same time, a number of Democrats have pledged their vote to save Boehner, if it came down to it. *The Hill* explains that support from the Democrats would save him:

If all 188 Democrats banded together and simply voted “present” on the motion to oust Boehner, the incumbent Speaker would easily win a majority of his 247-member GOP conference. He would just needs 124 votes, or more than half of the GOP lawmakers voting that particular day.

Unfortunately for Boehner, Democratic support would also create a Catch-22, as conservatives have already indicated that it would be suicide for him politically.

An anonymous conservative lawmaker told *The Hill*, “He could go cut a deal with Pelosi, but would you really want to govern after that, knowing that Democrats saved your bacon?”

“He’d be worse off — it’d be an embarrassment,” the source added. “That would be pretty pathetic to want [the speakership] that badly that you would take it under those circumstances.”

And while the Republicans stand divided amongst themselves, the Democrats can sit back and enjoy the show — and the passage of a “clean” spending bill, made dirty by its continued funding for the notorious Planned Parenthood.



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