



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on September 25, 2009

## House Passes Bill to Keep Govt Running

The House of Representatives passed a temporary spending bill on September 25 to keep the federal government in business through October. In order to avoid a government shutdown, the Senate must now approve the measure before the new fiscal year starts on October 1.

"Few Republicans voted for the bill, which passed on a largely party-line vote of 217 to 190," [Reuters reported](#) on September 25. Legislators are going to need the month of October to finalize the 12 spending bills that will fund the government for fiscal year 2010.



The House spending bill funds most government operations at current levels, but increases spending for veterans' healthcare and the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau needs funds to prepare for the upcoming 2010 census.

Highway programs would continue under the bill, and the U.S. Postal Service would be able to cover its budget shortfall by reducing its retirement account spending by \$4 billion. Federal funds would be prohibited from going to the liberal group ACORN, which is under fire for a secretly recorded video showing ACORN employees giving tax and housing advice to a couple posing as potential brothel owners and human traffickers.

"Our principal obligation on this bill is simply to keep the government open," said Representative David Obey (D-Wis.), chairman of the committee responsible for spending. "We've got enough problems in the economy right now without adding to people's uncertainty."

Republicans were certain that they objected to the spending measure being combined with a separate bill to boost congressional operations by 3.4 percent while increasing staff pay and perks. The combination move probably ensures that both bills will pass with minimal trouble, but some Republicans thought that Congress should finish work on national security spending bills before increasing its own budget.

"No one, including Congress and the American people, is well served by a government shutdown. However, putting the interests of members of Congress before the interests of the American people is a poor way to do business," said Representative Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.), the spending committee's leading Republican.

When the Republican-dominated Congress got into a spending disagreement with Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1995 and 1996, the federal government did shutdown operations. Obey said the combination of bills was the best stopgap measure to prevent another shutdown because they were the only bills available at the moment which were completely ready for passage.

AP [quoted](#) on September 25 the homeland security funding panel's top Republican, Representative Harold Rogers (R-Ky.), as saying: "Instead of actually doing our work and fulfilling the security needs of



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our nation, we're placing a 'priority' on Congress' own budget, putting the homeland security spending bill on ice."

AP further noted that "Congress is rewarding itself with a 6 percent budget boost, though the \$51 million increase for the House office budget account represents an 8 percent increase. The Senate rewarded itself with a 6 percent boost for its office accounts."

While not surprising, Congress has once again looked out for its own interests as a matter of course while continuing funding for many unconstitutional programs. The defunding of ACORN is a pleasant exception to the rule, but there is so much more that could be done to cut unauthorized spending. Americans can expect no changes until they elect representatives who are responsible adherents to the U.S. Constitution.



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