



Written by [David Kelly](#) on November 13, 2023

Speaker Johnson Offers Plan to Avert Government Shutdown

With a government shutdown set for this Friday, newly elected House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) faced both criticism and support while offering a two-step government funding plan last Saturday that would keep the government operating through early 2024.

The stopgap funding bill, or [continuing resolution](#) (CR), would extend funding for a number of federal agencies until mid-January, with the remainder of the government being funded through February 2.

According to [ABC News](#), Johnson said in a statement, “This two-step continuing resolution is a necessary bill to place House Republicans in the best position to fight for conservative victories. The bill will stop the absurd holiday-season omnibus tradition of massive, loaded up spending bills introduced right before the Christmas recess. Separating out the CR from the supplemental funding debates places our conference in the best position to fight for fiscal responsibility, oversight over Ukraine aid, and meaningful policy changes at our Southern border.”

The CR drew opposition from both sides of the aisle, with Representative Chip Roy (R-Texas), [stating](#) that the bill is “... 100% clean. And I 100% oppose,” and Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-Wash.) [calling](#) the plan “the craziest, stupidest thing I’ve ever heard of.”

Shortly after Johnson’s CR was introduced, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre issued a [statement](#) calling the proposed bill “a recipe for more Republican chaos and more shutdowns—full stop.” She added, “... House Republicans are wasting precious time with an unserious proposal that has been panned by members of both parties. An Extreme Republican Shutdown would put critical national security and domestic priorities at risk, including by forcing service members to work without pay. This comes just days after House Republicans were forced to pull two of their own extreme appropriations bills from the floor—further deepening their dysfunction. House Republicans need to stop wasting time on their own political divisions, do their jobs, and work in a bipartisan way to prevent a shutdown.”



AP Images
Mike Johnson



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The funding bill did appear to gain some limited support, with Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) telling [Meet the Press](#) on Sunday that “we cannot have a government shutdown this weekend, certainly not while we are facing these existential crises for our friends in Israel and Ukraine.”

Murphy added, “I don’t like this laddered CR approach. It looks gimmicky to me. But I’m open to what the House is talking about. The priority has to be keeping the government open, and I think this is a moment where reasonable people in the Senate, and that’s where most of the reasonable people are these days, have to make sure that we are not making the perfect the enemy of the good. I don’t like what the House is talking about, but I’m willing to listen.”

Adding to the importance of the dire situation of not only solving the immediate need to fund the government this week, but stopping overspending and growing the national debt, the [credit rating](#) of the United States was changed to “negative” from “stable” on Friday by the ratings firm Moody’s.

The ongoing “political polarization” in the federal government led to the rating change, as did concerns that there is no apparent solution to the nation’s debt crisis.

Moody’s reported:

In the context of higher interest rates, without effective fiscal policy measures to reduce government spending or increase revenues, Moody’s expects that the US’ fiscal deficits will remain very large, significantly weakening debt affordability. Continued political polarization within [the] US Congress raises the risk that successive governments will not be able to reach consensus on a fiscal plan to slow the decline in debt affordability.

Speaker Johnson needs to find common ground to pass the CR, which will avert a shutdown but kick the fiscal can down the road. Debate and a potential vote could happen as soon as Tuesday. However, as highlighted by Moody’s, the nation’s fiscal situation is dire, and our government needs to not only end “political polarization” and massive government overspending, but reverse course away from the fiscal abyss or face permanent third-world status.



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