

House G.O.P. Considers Stopgap Spending Bill to Avert a Shutdown

Republicans were presented a plan on Sunday night to cut spending, impose strict border restrictions and keep federal agencies open for another month to allow more time to pass annual spending bills.

By Carl Hulse
New York Times

House Republicans considered a new stopgap funding proposal on Sunday aimed at averting a government shutdown at the end of the month, but it was unlikely that the plan, which would slash spending for most federal agencies and resurrect tough Trump-era border initiatives, could break the deep impasse on Capitol Hill.

The legislation presented to rank and file lawmakers in a conference call on Sunday night was the latest effort by House Republican leaders to find a way out of a daunting funding logjam that left their plans to consider annual spending bills in chaos last week and has put Congress on a path to a government closure on Oct. 1.

Leaders of both chambers concede that a stopgap measure will be needed to keep government agencies open after the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year, when funding is set to lapse, because none of the 12 annual appropriations bills have yet cleared Congress.

The House proposal emerged from talks between right-wing and more mainstream Republicans and was meant to represent a compromise that both factions could embrace, avoiding a politically treacherous shutdown while also providing some funding cuts and border controls demanded by the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus. But its fate was in serious doubt as reservations quickly emerged among some Republicans, and it was all but certain to be dead on arrival in the Democratic-controlled Senate even if the House could manage to pass it.

Republicans tentatively set a vote for Thursday, allowing time to overcome resistance in their ranks.

The proposal came after Speaker Kevin McCarthy said earlier Sunday that he intended to resurrect a Pentagon spending measure that stalled last week in an embarrassing setback for the speaker and try to push it to the House floor despite pledges by members of the Freedom Caucus to oppose the move unless their sweeping demands on spending were met.

His decision, announced on Fox News, was a bid to pressure far-right members to drop their insistence on steeper spending cuts or risk political heat for blocking the Pentagon funding bill. Pushing ahead with the military spending bill along with the new stopgap plan would be a major test of the ultraconservative Republicans, who are using the

threat of a government shutdown at the end of the month to press their spending goals, as well as of Mr. McCarthy's ability to unify the House G.O.P. with his job on the line.

"We'll bring it to the floor, win or lose, and show the American public who's for the Department of Defense, who's for the military, who's for giving them a pay raise," Mr. McCarthy said on "Sunday Morning Futures." He added that "any time a Republican wants to hold back and stop the floor from working when Republicans have the majority, that puts us in a weaker position to win in the end of the day."

The proposed stopgap bill would extend funding through Oct. 31 and impose a nearly 8 percent spending cut on most federal agencies while exempting the Pentagon, veterans programs and disaster relief, resulting in a roughly 1 percent cut overall. It would include most elements of a [tough immigration measure approved by the House in May](#), except for the E-Verify employment verification system, a plan that has drawn fire on several fronts.

It does not include additional assistance to Ukraine or added disaster aid, both of which are being sought by senators of both parties.

In the conference call, Mr. McCarthy told House Republicans that they could not prevail in a fight with the Senate if they could not pass a bill themselves, according to lawmakers who attended and described the discussion on the condition of anonymity.

The problem for Mr. McCarthy and his leadership team is that some of the most conservative House Republicans have said they do not intend to vote for a stopgap bill, known as a continuing resolution, under any circumstances, and he has just a handful of votes to spare.

"For months, I have made it very clear that I will not be supporting a CR. And this week is no different," Representative Matt Rosendale, a Montana Republican, wrote on the X platform on Sunday night, after the call in which Mr. McCarthy briefed his members on the proposal. "A CR is a continuation of Nancy Pelosi's budget and Joe Biden's policies."

Representative Eli Crane, Republican of Arizona and another of the right-wing holdouts, was more terse in his response: "NO," he wrote in a post on X, which was previously known as Twitter.

But Mr. McCarthy is desperate to pass legislation and put pressure on the Senate to respond.

Democrats quickly dismissed the legislation.

"Less than two weeks away from a government shutdown, House Republicans are still more focused on introducing extreme funding bills that would cut funding to the National Institutes of Health, including funding for cancer research, defund the police and decrease resources to important allies like Ukraine and Israel than working on

bipartisan solution that could be enacted,” said Representative Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, the senior Democrat on the Appropriations Committee.

The speaker, who is battling calls from the far right for his ouster over his handling of the spending bills, also reiterated his view, made in private meetings with House Republicans last week, that Congress must avoid a government shutdown after Sept. 30. He said his own experience with previous government closures had convinced him that they are best avoided, and that a shutdown would put President Biden in a stronger position.

“I’ve never seen somebody win a shutdown,” he said on Sunday. “A shutdown would only give strength to the Democrats. It would give the power to Biden.”

Both the House and the Senate ran into snags last week in their efforts to advance yearlong spending bills, as far-right Republicans [knocked the appropriations process off-track](#) with time running short.

Mr. McCarthy is maneuvering on the spending issues as he faces threats from the far right about a possible move to remove him from the top House post for not keeping spending commitments and honoring other concessions he made to secure their votes for the speakership during his [15-round battle for the job](#) in January. The speaker said he would fight to hold his job and that he would not let the threats distract him from the spending showdown.

“I’m only going to focus on the American public,” he said on Fox, adding: “We have made great progress here in changing this capital. And when you change Washington, you get enemies.”

Several more mainstream Republicans expressed frustration last week at the efforts of the most conservative wing of their party to hold up the spending bills and have been urging Mr. McCarthy to put the Pentagon bill on the floor. Representative Elise Stefanik, Republican of New York and a member of the leadership team, said on Sunday that she and a majority of G.O.P. lawmakers “believe the speaker will survive any type of motion” to remove him from his post.

On ABC’s “This Week,” Representative Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic leader, said the Republican infighting on spending issues amounted to a “civil war,” and he would not say if Democrats would help Mr. McCarthy hold on to his spot if a floor challenge became a reality.

“If that moment presents itself, we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it,” Mr. Jeffries said. “But what we should be focused on right now is avoiding an unnecessary government shutdown that will hurt the ability of our economy to continue to recover, which President Biden has led a tremendous recovery to date. And that shouldn’t be interrupted because of partisan, political gamesmanship.”

Luke Broadwater and Annie Karni contributed reporting.