

Ohio Congress members suggest government shutdown fixes as funding bill deadline nears

By **Sabrina Eaton**
cleveland.com

WASHINGTON, D. C. – As [a government shutdown](#) appears increasingly likely because of a budget impasse in Congress, several Ohio legislators are proposing bills meant to ease its effects.

Feuding Republicans who control the U.S. House of Representatives have been unable to agree on funding bills they'd have to pass to begin negotiations with the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate with just 10 days before funding expires Oct 1.

Even if they pass an initial measure, their inability to achieve consensus on their opening bid does not bode well for reaching a swift compromise with the Senate and Democratic President Joe Biden that could become law.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said he's continuing negotiations in an effort to pass legislation.

"If I come up short today, I'm gonna work harder tomorrow," [McCarthy said on social media](#). "That's what I do."

U.S. Rep. Max Miller, a Rocky River Republican, blamed five to seven of his GOP colleagues for impasse. He said 98% of Republicans in the House of Representatives wanted to approve a fiscally conservative funding bill and said a tiny minority are opposing it "to elevate" themselves.

"I believe they want something for themselves and not American people," said Miller, who also expressed disgust with colleagues who have already left Washington for the weekend even though they were asked to remain for more funding votes.

If Congress doesn't agree on a measure to fund the federal government by the end of September, [many of its functions](#) will shut down after funding expires. Government workers at facilities like the NASA Glenn Research Center won't be able to work.

Workers deemed necessary for national security, like air traffic controllers and members of the military, stay on the job but don't get paid. Processing of passports and new applications for Social Security will be delayed.

According to the American Federation of Government Employees union, during the last partial government shutdown, 800,000 federal employees went five weeks without a paycheck, with half forced to work without pay and another half locked out of their jobs. The U.S. economy also took an \$11 billion hit.

Ohio members of Congress said they're working to avoid a shutdown but also working on legislation that would mitigate its effects, though passage seems unlikely before the Oct. 1 deadline.

U.S. Rep. Emilia Sykes, an Akron Democrat, on Thursday joined Warrensville Heights Democratic Rep. Shontel Brown in introducing legislation called the "Feed Our Families During a Shutdown Act," which would ensure that [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) recipients could access their benefits up to three months after a government shutdown occurs.

Brown said [more than 1.4 million people in Ohio](#) receive SNAP benefits, including nearly a quarter of her constituents in Ohio's 11th congressional district. Sykes said 47,926 households in her district rely on SNAP.

"We cannot play politics with people's food," said a statement from Brown, a member of the House Agriculture Committee that has jurisdiction over the SNAP program. "An extended shutdown putting their benefits at risk, and increasing hunger for working families, children and the elderly is unacceptable."

Sykes teamed up with Nebraska Republican Rep. Don Bacon to introduce a second bill called the "Pay Our Military Act," which would ensure pay continues to our servicemen and women during a government shutdown. Brown is a cosponsor of that bill.

If Congress fails to enact appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year by Sept. 30, military servicemembers would be forced to work without pay. Sykes said 6,821 active-duty military members reside in Ohio and 40,461 veterans live in the congressional district she represents.

"Shutting the government down isn't a game – it would have real, devastating consequences for Americans across the country, including people in Ohio's 13th congressional District," Sykes said in a statement. "Constituents are calling my office every day worried about how they will continue to pay their bills, access healthcare, or put food on the table if the government shuts down."

Bacon said in a statement that a shutdown would create unnecessary national security risks.

"Even worse, a lapse in pay would hurt military servicemembers and families who already pay too high a price for their selfless service to our nation," Bacon continued.

U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, a Dayton Republican who chairs the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and serves on the Armed Services committee, teamed up with the House Judiciary Committee's top Democrat [on legislation](#) called the "It's About Time Act" that would align the federal government's funding schedule with the calendar year.

The pair said requiring the fiscal year to correspond with the calendar year would increase efficiency and better align the government with its industry counterparts.

A statement from Turner said that requiring budgets to be passed on Oct. 1 puts military readiness and other vital services at risk as Congress consistently struggles to pass spending bills by that deadline. He said having the fiscal calendar start on Jan. 1 “would mitigate the unrealistic time constraints on Congress and allow government services to continue uninterrupted.

“We cannot allow the critical operations at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to be threatened by senseless shutdowns,” Turner added.

New York Democrat Jerrold Nadler, who worked on the bill with Turner, said 1997 was the last time Congress passed all its required government funding bills by the Oct. 1 deadline.

“Changing the start of the fiscal year to the beginning of the calendar year will diminish the risk of government shutdowns by ensuring Congress has the time it needs to evaluate the budget proposal submitted by the President and craft spending bills,” said Nadler.