

House Republicans Clash Over Spending Days Ahead of Shutdown Deadline

Party divisions forced Republicans to abandon two of their own spending measures this week as they toiled to agree on a stopgap spending bill to avert a shutdown next Saturday.

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New York Times

At odds with one another on spending, House Republicans abruptly scrapped their legislative work on Thursday and left Washington with little progress toward funding the government and no plan to avert a shutdown next week.

Speaker Mike Johnson, just two weeks into the job, had yet to give any public indication about his plan to prevent a lapse in government spending — currently slated to happen next Friday at midnight if Congress fails to act. That effort would involve rallying deeply anti-spending Republicans around a stopgap funding bill that is likely to be a dead letter in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Instead of revealing a path forward to keep the government open, Mr. Johnson spent the week trying and failing to push through two individual spending bills that collapsed for lack of G.O.P. support. It was yet another reflection of the rifts among House Republicans that have made their tiny majority ungovernable, leading to the ouster of their last speaker and so far confounding his successor, who is far more conservative and less experienced.

“We have a lot of people that want to pass things with Republicans only,” said Representative Tom Cole of Oklahoma, the chairman of the Rules Committee and a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. “That’s one thing when there’s 240 or 250 votes. When it’s 220 and you’ve got as many individual personalities — and to be fair, different interests and different districts — that’s a risky game to play.”

On Thursday, House G.O.P. leaders abruptly canceled a vote on a spending bill to fund the Treasury Department and other financial agencies, the latest indication of the deep divisions among Republicans over funding federal programs that have pushed Congress repeatedly to the brink of economic chaos this year.

Across the Capitol, Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York and the majority leader, took initial procedural steps to allow the Senate to move forward with its own stopgap spending measure if necessary, with time running short to avoid a shutdown.

“I implore Speaker Johnson and our House Republican colleagues to learn from the fiasco of a month ago,” Mr. Schumer said. “Hard-right proposals, hard-right slashing cuts, hard-right poison pills that have zero support from Democrats will only make a shutdown more likely. I hope they don’t go down that path in the week to come.”

Whether Mr. Johnson is willing to put forward a stopgap spending bill that Democrats can accept remains to be seen. That move ultimately doomed his predecessor as speaker, Kevin McCarthy, after it became clear he could not pass a temporary funding measure — even one with deep spending cuts — with only Republican votes.

Mr. Johnson is substantially to the right of Mr. McCarthy and so far seems intent on not leaning on Democrats to pass a funding bill.

Mr. Cole said that some hard-line conservatives told appropriators they would not support any kind of stopgap bill to avert a shutdown, meaning that Mr. Johnson ultimately might have no choice but to push a bill through with Democratic support.

Representative Chip Roy of Texas, an influential conservative, said he would only support a stopgap spending bill with deep cuts and conservative policy priorities attached — legislation that could not survive in the Democratic-led Senate. “Certainly not anything that would resemble a so-called clean C.R.,” he said, using the shorthand for continuing resolution.

Representative Tim Burchett of Tennessee, who voted to oust Mr. McCarthy, said he wanted “to give our new speaker every chance he can have.” But he noted that he had never voted for a stopgap funding bill before and was reluctant to do so for a first time.

“I just think we’re abdicating our duty,” he said. “We’re required to do two things: pass 12 appropriations bills and a budget, and for 30 years we’ve not done that.”

But Mr. Johnson’s efforts to pass 12 spending bills to fund the government have hit the same obstacles that Mr. McCarthy faced as he tried to shepherd the bills through. Republican leaders pulled votes on both the Treasury Department bill and another to fund the Transportation Department because of deep divisions within their ranks.

More mainstream lawmakers in particular have opposed the deep spending cuts and partisan policy riders [included in the appropriations bills](#).

On Thursday, a bloc of them opposed the financial services bill because it contained a provision aimed at undermining a 2014 Washington, D.C., law intended to protect employees from being discriminated against for seeking contraceptive or abortion services. A group of conservatives also opposed the bill because it did not include an amendment that the House voted down prohibiting federal funds from being used to purchase a new building for the F.B.I.

The moderates said it was unconscionable for Republicans to attach unrelated anti-abortion measures to the spending bills just days after the party was clobbered on the issue on Tuesday in off-year elections.

“We’ll see next week what we actually do,” said Representative John Duarte of California, who represents a district President Biden won in 2020. “A lot of it will have to do with, can we pass some clean appropriations bills and get the monkey business out of them?”