

# Republicans unveil another extension to try to avert government shutdown

*With less than a week to go before a March 14 shutdown deadline, it is not clear if Republicans have the votes to pass the continuing resolution unveiled Saturday.*

**By Marianna Sotomayor and Theodoric Meyer**  
**Washington Post**

With less than a week to go before a March 14 shutdown deadline, President Donald Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) are pushing a bill that would extend current funding levels until the end of the fiscal year in late September.

The [measure unveiled Saturday](#), known as a continuing resolution, or CR, would stave off a politically costly shutdown if it passes.

But it would also mean that Republicans, who control both chambers of Congress and the White House, would largely keep funding set by President Joe Biden last year, rather than allow the appropriations committees to set new spending levels — hardly the win they were hoping for.

It is also not guaranteed to pass the narrowly divided House, where Republicans have a 218-214 majority and have had to rely on [Democrats](#) to pass previous funding measures to keep the government open. As it is, House Republicans can afford to lose only a single vote if all lawmakers are present.

The House Republican plan trims spending from the 2024 fiscal year by \$13 billion in nondefense spending. It would increase funding for veteran health care and defense in an attempt to assuage defense hawks. And it includes more flexibility for the White House to direct funding, according to House GOP leadership aides, including a request by the administration for more money to support Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The spending reductions would not touch benefits such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, the aides said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

to describe private deliberations. But the bill would reduce funding for public defenders in D.C., international peacekeeping, mental health and substance abuse treatment, workforce training programs and National Institutes of Health research, among other programs.

The bill does not include disaster relief for fires in California earlier this year or funds that legislators take back to their districts for community projects. It also does not raise the debt limit, which Congress must address in the coming months.

By bypassing the yearly appropriations process, Congress would cede some of its power to dictate how money is spent — which is exercised through that process with more specificity — and give the Trump administration more leeway over federal spending. Democrats argue that a continuing resolution would make it easier for Elon Musk, who oversees the U.S. DOGE Service, to drastically slash the size of government because it continues current funding levels without as much specificity about how the money should be spent.

Republicans have [raised concerns about some of Musk's cuts](#), but they largely support his efforts to slash the federal government.

After the bill was released, Trump encouraged his party to support the measure. “We have to remain UNITED — NO DISSENT — Fight for another day when the timing is right,” Trump [wrote on Truth Social](#).

Trump's support of a continuing resolution that covers the whole fiscal year has largely united Republicans behind that idea as the GOP seeks to avoid a shutdown that could be politically damaging. It would also allow Republicans to refocus on piecing together the “big, beautiful bill” that's at the heart of Trump's legislative agenda through a process called reconciliation by the spring and begin negotiations to fund the government for the 2026 fiscal year before September's deadline.

Johnson's staff and the Trump administration have been in close coordination, ironing out the funding plan for some time. It has quickly gained the backing of fiscal hawks who often vote against such stopgap measures.

The united front stopped Senate and House appropriators from reaching a topline number to fund the government through this fiscal year, which would

require at least a short-term CR to allow time to work on the legislation involved before each chamber votes on the bills.

“I am working with the GREAT House Republicans on a Continuing Resolution to fund the Government until September to give us some needed time to work on our Agenda,” Trump wrote Wednesday on Truth Social. “Conservatives will love this Bill, because it sets us up to cut Taxes and Spending in Reconciliation, all while effectively FREEZING Spending this year.”

The bill released Saturday is 99 pages long. During funding talks in December, Musk forced Johnson to reconsider his [funding plan](#) and claimed victory once the bill was shorter, down to 118 pages from 1,500.

Trump recently met with members of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus to address concerns. The group, whose members often vote against such measures, appears sold on Trump’s full-year funding plan, and members said they believe it can pass with just Republican votes.

Their support hinges on Congress giving the Trump administration more leeway to use federal funds as they wish. Rep. Tim Burchett (R-Tennessee), who has voted against CRs throughout his career, told reporters after the meeting that he was “open” to possibly supporting it after Trump reassured him that DOGE, which stands for Department of Government Efficiency, would implement cuts. But Trump’s support has yet to cement unanimous GOP backing. Senate and House GOP leaders must still find the votes to approve the measure given that most Democrats, particularly in the House, appear unlikely to support it.

Spending bills have plagued House Republicans over the past two years, and their leadership has had to rely on Democrats to keep the government functioning.

House Democrats, however, are not expected to help this time. Democrats are worried that a long-term funding patch will give Trump and DOGE more control over how money is spent, according to multiple lawmakers and aides within the caucus.

“We cannot back a measure that rips away life-sustaining health care and retirement benefits from everyday Americans as part of the Republican scheme to pay for massive tax cuts for their wealthy donors like Elon Musk. Medicaid is

our redline,” Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (New York), Minority Whip Katherine Clark (Massachusetts) and Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar (California) wrote in a letter to fellow Democrats on Friday.

Some vulnerable Democrats representing districts Trump won remain concerned about political blowback from a shutdown. Democrats will hold a final caucus-wide discussion Tuesday to finalize how they will proceed. But some Democrats are already urging their colleagues to vote against it.

“Shame on any Dem who even thinks about it,” Rep. Jared Huffman (California) [wrote Saturday](#).

The top Democrats on the House and Senate appropriations committees also bashed the bill Saturday.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro (Connecticut) described it as “a power grab for the White House and further allows unchecked billionaire Elon Musk and President Trump to steal from the American people.”

Sen. Patty Murray (Washington), the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, described it as “a slush fund.”

“Instead of turning the keys over to the Trump administration with this bill, Congress should immediately pass a short-term CR to prevent a shutdown and finish work on bipartisan funding bills that invest in families, keep America safe, and ensure our constituents have a say in how federal funding is spent,” Murray said in a statement.

While House Republicans could theoretically advance their bill without Democratic support, Senate Republicans would need the support of at least seven Democrats to avert a government shutdown if all senators are voting.

Just one Senate Democrat — Sen. John Fetterman (Pennsylvania) — has committed to voting for a year-long CR. “Never, never, never vote for a shutdown — ever,” Fetterman [wrote on Friday](#).