

# Senate pushes closer to shutdown after Democrats spurn funding bill

*Not enough Democrats support the bill to overcome a filibuster, Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer said.*

**By Theodoric Meyer and Liz Goodwin**  
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Senate Democrats say they are prepared to vote to reject the Republicans' government funding bill, threatening a shutdown if lawmakers do not strike a deal within days.

Not enough Democrats support the bill to clear the 60-vote threshold needed to overcome a filibuster, Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-New York) said on the Senate floor Wednesday, with less than 72 hours before the government is set to shut down. Instead, Democrats are seeking a bill — known as a continuing resolution, or CR — to keep the government open through April 11 while the two parties complete work on their long-stalled spending bills.

“Republicans chose a partisan path, drafting their continuing resolution without any input — any input — from congressional Democrats,” Schumer said. “Because of that, Republicans do not have the votes in the Senate” to advance the bill.

Still, it is unclear whether the Democrats' ultimatum will trigger a shutdown when government funding expires at 12:01 a.m. Saturday. Democrats have not ruled out striking a deal with Republicans to prevent a shutdown by allowing votes on amendments in exchange for their support.

“I'm not sure exactly what their demand is,” Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-South Dakota) told reporters after Schumer spoke. Democrats might just be seeking a vote on their funding bill and, once it fails, will back Republicans' bill, he said.

The Republican bill is the only path forward that “keeps the government open,” he added. “The question of whether or not it stays funded now is up to the Democrats.”

House Democrats and liberal activists have urged Schumer and Senate Democrats to vote against the Republican bill, which passed the House on Tuesday with the support of one Democrat, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine. Democrats have criticized President Donald Trump and Republicans for crafting the bill without their input and including \$13 billion in cuts to nondefense programs such as mental health and substance abuse treatment and workforce training.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) sent lawmakers home after the House passed the bill, and he would need to recall them to Washington by Friday to avert a shutdown if the Senate makes any changes to the House bill.

Senate Democrats have agonized over whether to vote for the bill or block it and trigger a government shutdown. Democratic senators tried to hash out a strategy during a heated closed-door lunch meeting Wednesday to negotiate what Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) described as “a choice between two terrible alternatives.”

One Democratic senator, John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, has said he planned to support the Republican bill. But other Democrats have expressed wariness about triggering a shutdown, which they argue could help Trump and Elon Musk dismantle the federal government by giving Trump authority to determine which government employees are deemed essential and nonessential.

“If you shut down, he decides what is essential,” Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-Colorado) told reporters before the Senate Democrats’ lunch. “He’s the one who decides which arms of government continue, which arms get actually shut down. In a strange way, it gives him even more power.”

Triggering a shutdown also could be politically perilous because one of the party’s core criticisms of Trump and Republicans is that they are harming government services and workers — which a shutdown would also do. But some liberals believe Americans would blame Trump for a shutdown because Republicans control the House, the Senate and the White House.

Republicans need at least seven Democrats to support the bill if all Republicans vote for it. One Republican, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, said this week that he opposes it.

More Senate Democrats came out against the bill Wednesday, including Sen. Patty Murray (Washington), the No. 3 Senate Democrat and the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, who beseeched her colleagues to reject it, too.

“Defend your power as a senator,” Murray said on the Senate floor. “Vote down this partisan bill that turns the government into a piggy bank for billionaires.”

Democrats have objected to the bill in part because it lacks many of the funding directives that lawmakers write into a formal appropriations bill, which could empower the Trump administration to refuse to spend money on programs it does not like. Liberal activists have pushed Democrats to negotiate language that would explicitly bar Musk’s U.S. DOGE Service from impounding any congressionally mandated funds, in a bid to slow the Trump administration’s unilateral layoffs and cuts.

The four-week funding bill that Democrats are backing would not include the guardrails to force Trump to spend money as Congress has directed, but it would provide a bridge to allow lawmakers to finish appropriations bills that would contain such language. The Republican bill would fund the government through Sept. 30, giving Trump leeway over spending for much longer.

“There’s a lot less you can do in 30 days than in six months,” said Sen. Gary Peters (D-Michigan), a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Several liberal grassroots groups have directed their members in recent days to call Senate Democrats to press them to vote against the bill, which they view as one of the party’s few opportunities to exert leverage over Trump. Rep.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-New York) urged her followers Wednesday to call Democratic senators and encourage them to stand strong against the bill. “They are starting to cave,” she [wrote on X](#).

Top House Democrats have also urged Democratic senators to torpedo the bill.

“We think that our vote gives the Senate the strength and the message they need to stand up as well,” said Rep. Katherine Clark (Massachusetts), the No. 2 House Democrat.

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Connecticut), who said he planned to oppose the bill, said he was aware of the message it would send to the Democratic base if Democratic senators swallowed their objections and supported the bill.

“I am somebody that believes that the tactics we use inside this building matter — that there is a ripple effect,” Murphy said. “And when we fight hard here, people fight harder out around the country.”

*Marianna Sotomayor contributed to this report.*