

Trump, Musk intervene to squash funding bill, threatening government shutdown

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An agreement between Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer to keep the federal government funded at current rates until March 14, 2025 was thwarted Wednesday after Republican outcry and an intervention by President-elect Donald Trump and his Vice President-elect JD Vance.

In a statement posted on their social media accounts Wednesday, Trump and Vance added an entirely new demand which had not been raised in the congressional negotiations over the continuing resolution. They demanded that the stopgap legislation should also raise the US national debt ceiling. That limit on spending will technically be reached January 2, 2025, but in previous such cases the Treasury has been able to delay an actual default through financial maneuvers between various federal accounts, for as long as six months.

The two fascist Republicans now denounced a previous spending deal reached in 2023 between then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy and the Biden administration, which suspended the debt ceiling for the balance of 2023 and 2024, in return for significant social cuts. They wrote:

The most foolish and inept thing ever done by Congressional Republicans was allowing our country to hit the debt ceiling in 2025. It was a mistake and is now something that must be addressed.

After threatening former Rep. Liz Cheney for her role in the January 6 Select Committee, Trump and Vance wrote, “Increasing the debt ceiling is not great but we’d rather do it on Biden’s watch” adding that Republicans “must GET SMART and TOUGH. If Democrats threaten to shut down the government unless we give them everything

they want, then CALL THEIR BLUFF.”

Trump’s intervention killed any chance that the current spending bill will pass. A proposed vote on the spending package in the House Wednesday evening was canceled. It is unclear as of this writing if a new continuing resolution will be voted on before midnight on Friday to avoid a government shutdown.

In a statement posted on his X account Wednesday, Democratic Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries wrote: “House Republicans have been ordered to shut down the government. ... You break the bipartisan agreement, you own the consequences that follow.”

Top Trump adviser Elon Musk, the world’s richest man, denounced the stopgap bill, declaring that the “bill should not pass” and branding it a “piece of pork.” Threatening to fund primary challengers against every member of Congress, Musk whipped up Trump’s far-right followers on X, writing, “Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!”

Trump and his fascist allies are calling for a so-called “clean continuing resolution” or “clean CR,” that is, a spending bill that does not contain any other provisions. However, their demand for a rise in the debt ceiling (for the purposes of blaming it on the Biden administration) is itself a violation of a “clean CR,” and the Democrats, who still control the Senate, dismissed the possibility.

The debt limit is the total amount of money the US government is allowed to borrow in order to meet its existing obligations, including funding the military, Social Security, Medicare, tax refunds and interest on the national debt. Far-right Republicans have typically voted against any legislation that increases the debt limit.

The collapse of the previously agreed-to funding measure portends massive incoming spending cuts under the new Trump administration. Gloating on X following the bill’s collapse, Musk wrote: “Either there is massive

change or America goes bankrupt, therefore there must be massive change!”

Musk and fellow billionaire Vivek Ramaswamy are informally advising Trump as part of a self-proclaimed “Department of Government Efficiency,” which aims to cut \$2 trillion out of federal spending. They regard the continuing resolution as an unwarranted delay in bringing down the budget axe.

Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress had previously announced on Tuesday that they had reached an agreement to avoid the December 20 shutdown. Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer released the 1,500-page bill which continued most federal spending at the levels that prevailed when Fiscal Year 2024 ended on September 30.

The most significant changes to the bill were an additional \$100 billion in disaster aid, mainly to address the impact of hurricanes Helene and Milton, which devastated parts of Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, and \$10 billion in new direct payments to farmers.

A few parts of the bill related directly to the build-up of American imperialism towards war with China. The legislation prohibited certain types of US corporate investment in China in industries deemed vital to “national security.” The Pentagon was slated to receive a \$5 billion boost, including \$3 billion to repair facilities damaged by the hurricanes and \$2 billion for US bases on Guam, which were hit by a Pacific typhoon.

It also authorized an expanded national security drone program—in the midst of ongoing popular concern over supposed drone sightings over New Jersey and neighboring states, whipped by the media and both capitalist parties, and particularly by Trump.

In addition to disaster funding, the bill contained a major political concession by the Democrats. The Democrats dropped their opposition to a freeze on \$20 billion for the Internal Revenue Service, which was to be directed at stepped-up enforcement of tax collection from wealthy tax dodgers among the super-rich.

Republican outrage — beginning in the far-right House Freedom Caucus Tuesday and spreading throughout the conference Wednesday— was focused on several relatively minor last-minute spending additions. This included federal funds to rebuild Baltimore’s collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge and a provision to transfer control of the dilapidated RFK Stadium to Washington D.C.

There was also a perk for Senators and congressmen of

both parties—a cost-of-living raise in their already six-figure salaries. Such raises have been blocked since the 2008 financial collapse, out of fear of public reaction.

Multiple Republicans are outraged over Johnson’s inclusion of the Democratic proposals. Rep. Thomas Massie, a libertarian from Kentucky, told the *Washington Post* he would not vote for Johnson to remain speaker next month. The *Post*, citing two other members on condition of anonymity, surmised that Johnson “would probably be forced out of the running before lawmakers would have to make up their minds on January 3.

“Conversations about replacing Johnson as speaker had already begun in certain corners of the GOP conference in the last several days, according to multiple Republicans,” the *Post* wrote, citing a Republican member.

When the new Congress assembles, the Republicans will control the Senate, which flipped from a 51-49 Democratic majority to 53-47 Republican. After Trump is inaugurated, the Republican Party will control both houses of Congress and the White House for the first time since 2018.

The Republican majority in the House will be smaller, down from 222-213 before the election to 220-215. This figure will go even lower, at least temporarily, as two Republican representatives have been nominated for top positions in the Trump administration and will resign their seats once confirmed, while Republican Matt Gaetz resigned as soon as he was nominated, and he will not return in January. All three vacancies are in safe Republican districts and are expected to be filled by the late spring.



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