

UPDATE: Senate passes six-month funding bill hours before shutdown deadline, sending measure to Trump to be signed into law



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Senate approves funding bill hours before shutdown deadline, sending to Trump for signature

The Associated Press

March 14, 2025, 8:19 PM

The Senate swiftly approved legislation late Friday that would allow the District of Columbia to keep its budget intact, rather than roll back to 2024, fixing a provision that had drawn protests from the mayor and residents warning it would require \$1 billion in cuts to services.

The bill passed unanimously, without dissent, and now heads to the House. Lawmakers there are on recess, but expected to consider it when they return in late March.

[Read more: Senate unanimously approves fix to prevent \\$1B cuts for District of Columbia, sending bill to House](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed a [Republican-led spending bill](#) Friday hours before [a government shutdown](#), overcoming sharp Democratic opposition to the measure and sending it to President [Donald Trump](#) to be signed into law.

The essentially party-line vote, 54-46, reflected [gnawing Democratic angst](#) over how to confront the Trump administration as its [Department of Government Efficiency](#) fires [federal workers and dismantles operations](#). Democrats argued over whether to fight even risking a shutdown and fumed that Republicans drafted a measure that included little of their input, shortchanging health care, housing and other priorities.



Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., speaks to reporters as Republicans work to pass an interim spending bill that would avoid a partial government shutdown...[Read more](#)

But in the end, enough of the Democratic senators decided a government shutdown would be even worse, and backed Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer's strategy to allow the bill to come forward.

"A shutdown will allow DOGE to shift into overdrive," Schumer said. "Donald Trump and [Elon Musk](#) would be free to destroy vital government services at a much faster rate."

Democrats were confronted with two painful options: allowing passage of a bill they believe gives [President Donald Trump](#) vast discretion on spending decisions or voting no and letting funding lapse. All told, 10 Democrats voted to break the party's filibuster to advance the bill to a final vote. On final passage, two Democrats supported the bill, and one Republican, Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, opposed it. It funds the government for another six months.

Schumer gave members of his caucus days to vent their frustration about the options before them, but abruptly switched course and [made clear](#) on the eve of voting that he would not allow a government shutdown. His move outraged many in the party who want to fight the Trump agenda, but gave senators room to side with Republicans and allow the continuing resolution, often described as a CR, to advance.

Democrats from all corners looked to pressure senators to kill the bill. House members wrote letters, posted on social media and held press conferences in the hours before the vote.

“The American people sent Democrats to Congress to fight against Republican dysfunction and chaos,” said a letter from 66 House Democrats to Schumer.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries and his team dashed back to the Capitol urging senators to block the bill and negotiate a true compromise with Republicans. Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi called the bill “unacceptable.”

Some Democrats also argued that Republicans would take the blame for a shutdown, given they controlled all the levers of power in Congress and the White House.

“If you refuse to put forward an offer that includes any Democratic input and you don’t get Democratic votes, that’s on Republicans,” said Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

In contrast, Schumer picked up one unexpected nod of support — from Trump himself, who just a day earlier was gearing up to blame Democrats for any shutdown.

“Congratulations to Chuck Schumer for doing the right thing — Took ‘guts’ and courage!” the president posted on his social media account.

Congress has been unable to pass the annual appropriations bills designed to fund the government, so they’ve resorted to passing short-term extensions instead. The legislation before the Senate is [the third](#) such continuing resolution for the current fiscal year, now nearly half over.

The legislation would fund the federal government through the end of September. It would trim non-defense spending by about \$13 billion from the previous year and increase defense spending by about \$6 billion, which are marginal changes when talking about a topline spending level of nearly \$1.7 trillion.

The Republican-led House [passed](#) the spending bill Tuesday and then adjourned. The move left senators with a decision to either take it or leave it. And while Democrats pushed for a vote on a fourth short-term extension, GOP leadership made clear that option was a non-starter.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., and others made the case that any blame for a shutdown would fall squarely on Democrats. And House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said Republicans stood together to get the job done.

Meanwhile, some House Democrats lashed out at their colleagues across the Capitol after the vote.

“The constituents I represent need Democrats to stand up to this rogue administration,” said Rep. Steven Horsford, D-Nev. “What they got from Senate Democrats today was capitulation instead.”

But Schumer said Trump would seize more power during a shutdown, because it would give the administration the ability to deem whole agencies, programs and personnel non-essential, [furloughing staff](#) with no promise they would ever be rehired.

Democrats were critical of the funding levels in the bill. But they are more worried about the discretion the bill gives the Trump administration on spending decisions. Many Democrats are referring to the measure as a “blank check” for Trump.

Spending bills typically come with specific funding directives for key programs, but hundreds of those directives fall away under the continuing resolution passed by the House. So the administration will have more leeway to decide where the money goes.

For example, a Democratic memo said the bill would allow the administration to steer money away from combating fentanyl and instead use it on [mass deportation initiatives](#).

Several amendments to the bill failed, but one to eliminate funding for DOGE drew support from a Republican, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

The spending bill before the Senate is separate from the GOP effort to extend tax cuts for individuals passed in Trump's first term and to partially pay for them with spending cuts elsewhere in government.

That second package will be developed in the months ahead, but it was clearly part of the political calculus.

"You're looking at a one-two punch, a very bad CR, then a reconciliation bill coming down, which will be the final kick in the teeth for the American people," said Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said the Democratic arguments for voting against the bill were hypocritical because they were essentially calling for shutting down the government to protect the government.

"Democrats are fighting to withhold the paychecks of air traffic controllers, our troops, federal custodial staff," Cotton said. "They can't be serious."

Senators also unanimously approved a separate bill to fix an unexpected provision in the package that would require the District of Columbia to revert to 2024 budget levels, a cut of some \$1.1 billion, even though the district raises most of its own money. That bill, which now goes to House, would allow spending at 2025 levels.

Associated Press writers Leah Askarinam and Matt Brown contributed to this story from Leesburg, Va.

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