

Time's Up: Obama, GOP Scramble to Halt Shutdown

After another late night at the White House Thursday, congressional leaders have yet to reach a budget agreement.

With federal agencies beginning to prepare for a shutdown at midnight Friday, President Obama said he expects an answer before the deadline.

"I expect an answer in the morning," Obama said early Friday, emerging from a late session at the White House. "My hope is that I'll be able to announce to the American people, sometime relatively early in the day, that a shutdown has been averted."

While both the president and GOP lawmakers agreed Thursday night's talks had narrowed their differences, Obama admitted he did not have "wild optimism" about reaching an agreement.

No deal could soon mean about 800,000 federal workers, including U.S. military service members, will not receive paychecks.

"It is sad that some people will be out of work for a short period of time," said Tom McClusky, vice president of government affairs for the Family Research Council.

"Many of them, at least the government employees, will be paid after they are furloughed," he added. "However, there are people out of work right now because of the economy we are in."

"I guess they just want me to tell my 3-year-old daughter in the meantime that she can't eat, that she has to eat retroactively when I get paid again," government worker Lindsey Knapp said. ? ?Knapp is a federal government

employee who remembers all too well what happens when the government shuts down. She was serving in the military during the 21-day shutdown in 1995.

"The three week span over Christmas-these employees received no pay over that time," Knapp recalled. "The hospital actually started selling diapers and other essential items so people could get by."

With the budget deadline now hours away, Democrats tacitly agreed to slightly deeper spending cuts than before-at least \$34 billion to \$38 billion.

"I've said we've narrowed the issues-and we have. But the sad part about it (is) we keep never quite getting to the finish line," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said during Thursday night's late night budget session. ?Although a shutdown would be painful, some political observers say it may teach a lesson the country needs to learn.

"The government needs to shut down, I think, for people to understand that we are in serious crisis," McClusky said. "When the government shut down in 1995, two years later we had a balanced budget for the first time in decades."

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