

Trump Announces Deal With Lawmakers to End Government Shutdown

President Donald Trump said on Friday he has reached a deal with U.S. lawmakers for three weeks in stop-gap funding that would end a partial U.S. government shutdown now in its 35th day, with a senior Democratic aide saying that money the president demanded for a border wall is not included.

Trump had previously insisted on the inclusion of \$5.7 billion to help pay for a wall along the vast border – one of his signature campaign promises – in any legislation to fund government agencies but Democrats had blocked him.

If lawmakers do not agree after three weeks of talks to provide wall funding, Trump indicated the shutdown could resume or he could declare a national emergency to get the money. He also said he was not looking to build a concrete wall along the entire southern border.

The deal came as pressure mounted on Trump and Congress to get the government fully open and some 800,000 federal employees back on the job. Trump said he would act to ensure the government workers get their back pay “very quickly, or as soon as possible.”

He previously has indicated he was considering an emergency declaration to circumvent congressional funding powers if lawmakers do not fund his wall, an action that almost certainly would be swiftly challenged by Democrats as exceeding his authority under the U.S. Constitution.

With the effects of the shutdown spreading on Friday, Trump said a bipartisan congressional conference committee would meet to come up with a plan for border security.

Trump triggered the shutdown, which began on Dec. 22, with his hard-line wall-funding demand but Democrats, who control the House of Representatives, rejected it on the grounds that a wall would be costly, ineffective and immoral. Trump, whose Republicans have a majority in the Senate, has said it is necessary to curb illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

POSSIBLE VOTE ON FRIDAY

Shortly after Trump spoke, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said on the Senate floor that he hoped the chamber would vote on the funding bill later on Friday. The House aide said the chamber could pass the measure as soon as later Friday if Republicans agree to hold a vote.

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers have been furloughed or, as with some airport workers, required to work without pay. Some federal agencies have reported much higher absence rates among workers as they face an indefinite wait for their next paychecks.

"We do not need 2,000 miles (3,200 km) of concrete wall from sea to shining sea. We never did," Trump said. "We never proposed that. We never wanted that because we have barriers at the border where natural structures are as good as anything that we could build.

"Our proposed structures will be in predetermined, high-risk locations that have been specifically identified by the Border Patrol to stop illicit flows of people and drugs," Trump said.

The temporary funding bill would extend agency funding at the last fiscal year's levels and would include some money for border security – but not a wall, which Trump had initially said would be paid for by Mexico.

In one of the many effects of the shutdown, hundreds of flights were grounded or delayed at airports in the New York area and Philadelphia on Friday as more air traffic

controllers called in sick.

The Federal Aviation Administration issued a ground stop for flights destined for New York's LaGuardia Airport on Friday morning before lifting it about an hour later. Staff shortages also delayed flights at Newark Liberty International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport, the FAA said.

The lapse in funding has shuttered about one-quarter of federal agencies, with about 800,000 workers either furloughed or required to work without pay. It is the longest such shutdown in U.S. history. Many employees as well as contractors were turning to unemployment assistance, food banks and other support. Others began seeking new jobs.

A Washington Post-ABC News opinion poll published on Friday showed public disapproval of Trump has swelled 5 percentage points to 58 percent over three months, with a majority of Americans holding him and congressional Republicans most responsible for the shutdown. The poll found that more than one in five Americans say they have been personally inconvenienced by the shutdown. {eo}

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