

Shutdown Enters Second Week as Washington Stalemate Hardens and Layoff Threats Emerge

Two rival funding bills failed in the Senate, deepening the partisan divide over healthcare tax credits. With talks frozen, the White House warns layoffs could follow if negotiations collapse, fueling growing public frustration reflected in new polling.

Federal / **Published On October 06, 2025 06:00 AM /**

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The Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. By. GETTY IMAGES.

The shutdown of the federal government has entered its second week, with Republicans and Democrats seemingly further entrenched in their respective positions.

On Friday, two proposals for ending the shutdown failed after neither reached the 60-vote threshold needed to move forward in the Senate. The Republican measure, which was already

passed in the House of Representatives and attracted 3 votes from Democratic senators, would extend funding for the federal government until November 21. Meanwhile, a bill from Democrats would have kept the government open through October while explicitly preserving the insurance premium tax credits.

The messaging from both parties has remained largely unchanged since the shutdown began on October 1. Democrats have withheld support for a continuing resolution to fund the government, insisting that any stopgap measure must include an extension of healthcare tax credits set to expire at the end of the year. They argue that without the subsidies, average insurance premium payments could more than double for more than 22 million people enrolled in Affordable Care Act plans. Republicans, however, contend that Democrats are using the shutdown to leverage partisan policy demands, asserting that the existing healthcare credits extend benefits to undocumented immigrants and contribute to excessive federal spending. Some observers note, however, that Democrats could preserve their negotiating power by supporting a shorter funding measure—such as their proposed October 31 version—reopening the government immediately while still retaining the opportunity to renegotiate the healthcare subsidies before they expire at year's end.

The failure of the two competing proposals came after a meeting between President Trump and Democratic congressional leadership ended in stalemate last Monday, with the president posting an AI-generated video of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jefferies wearing a sombrero alongside Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, whose utterances in the deepfake video were fabricated to parrot Republican talking points. Democrats later responded with AI-generated Sombrero videos of their own, mocking Republicans.

With negotiations between the White House and congressional leaders at a standstill, and House Speaker Mike Johnson extending the chamber's recess until next week, efforts to end the shutdown remain stalled. The impasse is expected to continue unless Senate Republicans opt to invoke the "nuclear option," a procedural move that would allow a continuing resolution to pass with a simple majority rather than the usual 60 votes. The procedural maneuver, seldom used for legislation, was most recently invoked in September 2025 to approve a block of Trump administration nominees (mainly sub-Cabinet and ambassadorial positions) under revised Senate rules allowing group confirmations by simple majority.

Republicans have not publicly discussed invoking the procedural "nuclear option," instead emphasizing a coordinated messaging effort that blames Democrats for the ongoing shutdown. That message has been echoed in some federal agency communications, where websites and automated emails have attributed the lapse in funding to congressional Democrats or the "radical left." Critics argue that such messaging could violate the Hatch Act, which prohibits most executive branch employees from engaging in partisan political activity. However, administration officials maintain that the language merely explains the cause of the shutdown from their perspective and does not constitute political advocacy.

A new [CBS News poll](#) underscores broad public frustration with how national leaders are managing the shutdown. Only 32 percent of Americans approve of President Trump's handling of the situation — the highest rating among the three groups measured — while 28 percent approve of congressional Republicans and 27 percent of congressional Democrats. Although Trump holds a narrow edge, the results reflect widespread disapproval overall, with majorities in both parties saying the shutdown has gone on too long and that neither side has shown sufficient willingness to compromise.

According to recent polling, more Americans tend to place greater responsibility on Republicans (and Trump) than on Democrats for the shutdown, though a significant share blame both parties or remain undecided. In the CBS-YouGov survey, respondents also characterized Democrats more often as “weak” and Republicans as “extreme” — labels that reflect negative public sentiment toward both sides.

The White House has warned that mass layoffs could begin if negotiations remain stalled. Economic adviser Kevin Hassett said during a recent interview that President Trump “will start to see layoffs” if he concludes the talks are going nowhere. Administration officials have described the move as a contingency measure to reduce costs amid the funding lapse, while critics argue that threatening job losses for federal workers during a politically driven standoff adds unnecessary pressure and undermines morale across the civil service.

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