

Trump signs spending bill to end longest shutdown in US history

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on Capitol Hill



Watch: Trump signs bill to end longest US government shutdown

President Donald Trump has signed a spending bill to reopen the government and end the longest shutdown in US history.

He signed the short-term budget into law just hours after the House of Representatives voted 222-209 to approve it on Wednesday night, and two days after the Senate narrowly approved the same package.

In the Oval Office, Trump said the government would now "resume normal operations" after "people were hurt so badly" from the 43-day shutdown.

Many government services have been suspended since October, and around 1.4 million federal employees have been on unpaid leave or working without pay. Food aid has also been left in limbo and air travel has been disrupted nationwide.

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Government services are expected to reopen in the coming days, while disruptions to air travel will likely ease ahead of the looming Thanksgiving holiday. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had reduced air traffic because of staff shortages owing to the shutdown.

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That had direct impacts on members of Congress attempting to reach the nation's capital on Wednesday for the House vote.

Derrick Van Orden, a Wisconsin Republican, rode his motorcycle nearly 1,000 miles (1,609km) across the country to cast his vote in the House before it was sent to the president's desk.

The bill only provides funding to keep the government open until 30 January, when lawmakers will once again need to find a way to fund the government.

Before he signed it into law, Trump repeatedly cast blame for the shutdown on the Democratic Party. "They did it purely for political reasons," he said.

"When we come up to midterms and other things, don't forget what they've done to our country," he added.

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US GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Why is it happening?

THE CAUSE

- In the US, bills that set out funding for government services need at least 60 votes to be passed by the Senate
- There are 100 members of the Senate and 53 are Republicans which means **some Democrats have to vote for the bill for it to become law**. Democrats wanted some changes to the bill but they vote for it
- A stopgap bill designed to prevent the shutdown was passed in the House, or lower chamber, but it did not clear the Senate

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Senate Democrats were able to trigger the shutdown despite being a minority in the chamber, because Republicans were still seven short of the 60-vote threshold required to pass a funding bill.

They initially refused to support the bill, demanding that Republicans agree to extend health insurance subsidies for low-income Americans that are set to expire at the end of the year.

Republicans maintained that a healthcare discussion could come after the government was reopened.

But on Sunday, a group of eight Senate Democrats broke from the party and helped pass the spending package. They voted for it in exchange for a promise of a vote on those healthcare subsidies in December.

It led to fury within the Democratic Party, and public criticism from figures such as House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and California Governor Gavin Newsom.



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Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader in the chamber, said the package "fails to do anything of substance to fix America's healthcare crisis".

Virginia Senator Tim Kaine was among the group of Democrats who voted in favour of the compromise. He pushed back on that criticism, and said the federal workers he represents were "saying thank you" for agreeing the deal.

Hours before the House voted to reopen the government, Democrats in Congress watched as their newest lawmaker was sworn into office.

The addition did not provide enough leverage to impact whether healthcare subsidies were included in the government funding bill, but Democrats welcomed Adelita Grijalva into their ranks with applause on the floor of the chamber.

The Democratic representative for Arizona was elected on 23 September, but the House has not been in session since 19 September, delaying her swearing in. She is stepping into the seat once held by her father, Raul Grijalva, who died earlier this year.

Democrats immediately tapped their newest member to back a petition to force a vote on legislation requiring the release of files related to the late paedophile financier Jeffrey Epstein.

The petition will need to sit for seven legislative days before it can be called up for floor consideration - and then House leadership will be required to schedule a vote within two legislative days.

House Speaker Mike Johnson surprised many on Wednesday and said he would schedule a vote for next week.



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What's in the spending deal?

The deal negotiated over the weekend extends funding for the federal government until 30 January.

It also includes full-year funding for the Department of Agriculture, as well as funding for military construction and legislative agencies.

Guarantees that all federal workers will be paid for time during the shutdown, and funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) - which provides food aid to one in eight Americans - until next September are also included in the bill.

The package includes an agreement for a vote in December on extending the healthcare subsidies which Democrats had been holding out for concessions on.

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