

Government shutdown begins and lawmakers start finger-pointing

Required Annotations	Student-Created Annotations	Summary / Questions / Reflection
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The federal government shut down at the stroke of midnight Friday, January 19, because lawmakers could not agree on a federal budget. The federal budget funds the government and its many programs. This means only the most essential operations of government will continue until a budget is passed by Congress. The shutdown occurs on the one-year anniversary of President Donald Trump's inauguration.

What Happens During A Shutdown?

Last-minute negotiations predictably crumbled. It was expected that the Senate would vote against a temporary budget that would have kept the government running for four more weeks. This breakdown caused the fourth government shutdown in 25 years. Since the shutdown began at the start of a weekend when many government offices close, much of the immediate effects will happen quietly for most Americans.

Still, the shutdown is an embarrassment for the president and a political risk for both parties. Congressional elections are coming in November, and 33 senators and 435 representatives will be up for election. Both parties believe voters will punish the other for failing to keep the government running.

Social Security and most other programs that help the country's highest need populations will not be affected by the closure. Critical government functions will continue, too. Uniformed service members, health inspectors and law enforcement officers are set to work without pay.

If no deal is reached before Monday, however, hundreds of thousands of federal employees will be **furloughed**. This means they will be temporarily unable to work.

Democrats, Republicans Unwilling To Compromise

The Senate had until midnight to reach a deal on a budget. The House of Representatives had already passed a version that would allow the government to continue operating for four more weeks. Still, as midnight passed and the calendar turned, there was no obvious way to continue. Each party was unwilling to compromise.

Democrats voted against the temporary budget measure to keep the pressure on the White House to reach a deal that would protect "Dreamers." The "Dreamers" are immigrants who came to the country without permission as children. They are protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The program, which was started by President Barack Obama, allows "Dreamers" to live and work in the United States. The Trump administration will let the program run out in March, leaving the fate of 700,000 "Dreamers" up in the air.

Immigration A Critical Issue For Budget

Predictably, both parties moved swiftly to blame one another for the government shutdown. Democrats laid fault with Republicans, who control both Congress and Senate chambers, and the White House. Republicans argued that Democrats were harming fellow Americans to protect "illegal immigrants," referring to those in the DACA program.

Trump said on Twitter Democrats "could have easily made a deal but decided to play Shutdown politics instead." In a series of tweets hours after the shutdown began, the president tried to make the case for Americans to elect more Republicans to Congress in November "in order to power through this mess." He noted that there are 51 Republicans in the 100-member Senate, and it often takes 60 votes to advance legislation.

Reinforcing the president's position, White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said Saturday, January 20, that Trump will not discuss immigration policy until the shutdown ends.

Trump had brought Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer to the White House Friday afternoon in hopes of cutting a deal. The two New Yorkers came out without an agreement.

Trump's Opinion Has Shifted

Even before the vote, Trump was not hopeful. He tweeted, "Not looking good." He blamed the Democrats who he said actually wanted the shutdown "to help diminish the success" of the tax bill he and fellow Republicans pushed through last month. The bill granted large tax cuts to corporations and very wealthy individuals with the goal of stimulating the economy.

Trump had been an unreliable negotiator in the weeks leading up to the showdown. Earlier in the week he tweeted opposition to the four-week plan. The White House later communicated Trump's support for that plan. He had also expressed openness to extending DACA although, he rejected a proposal that both parties agreed on. His hateful and insulting remarks about African and Haitian immigrants last week helped derail further negotiations.

"We can't keep kicking the can down the road," said Schumer, insisting on more urgency in talks on immigration. "In another month, we'll be right back here, at this moment, with the same web of problems at our feet, in no better position to solve them."

The Last Shutdown Was In 2013

Before Thursday night's House approval, Republican leaders tried to sweeten the temporary spending bill. They offered to extend a popular health care program for low-income children. They would also allow "Obamacare" taxes popular with Democrats to go on for two more years.

This shutdown is the first since 2013. In that year, tea party Republicans tried to use a must-pass funding bill to force then-President Obama to delay putting his health care law into effect. This is similar to what Schumer and Democrats are doing now. At that time, with Obama as the president, Trump told Fox & Friends that the ultimate blame for a shutdown lies at the top. "I really think the pressure is on the president," he said.

Questions

- How does the article develop the idea that multiple factors contributed to the government shutdown?
 - by explaining the positions of President Trump and Republicans and Democrats in Congress on certain issues and how an agreement could not be reached prior to the shutdown
 - by sharing the details of the proposed temporary budget, comparing it with last year's budget and highlighting the areas that concerned President Trump and lawmakers in Congress
 - by discussing the 2013 government shutdown that occurred during Barack Obama's presidency and comparing its causes with the causes of the current shutdown
 - by analyzing issues that have to be resolved by Congress before a budget can be offered for discussion, and explaining various lawmakers' positions on those issues
- Which of the following answer choices would BEST describe Nancy Pelosi's reaction to the government shutdown?
 - She is upset that Trump and the Republicans were unable to prevent a shutdown.
 - She is concerned that the shutdown will negatively affect members of the community.
 - She is worried that the Republican majority in Congress will not be able to get the government running again.
 - She is shocked that the president did not take the blame for the government shutdown.
- Which statement BEST reflects one of Trump's beliefs?
 - Democrats did not want the government shutdown to occur because it would cause them to be voted out of Congress in November.
 - Democrats did not want the government shutdown to occur because they would not be able to negotiate for "Dreamers" if they were not in session.
 - Democrats wanted the government shutdown to occur so they could take time to revisit and revise the DACA program.
 - Democrats wanted the government shutdown to occur so that it would take away from the success of his recently passed tax bill.
- Complete the sentence. Leading up to the government shutdown, Republicans in Congress were MOST concerned with _____.
 - extending CHIP legislation for children from low-income families.
 - convincing Democrats to help pass a temporary budget.
 - revisiting "Obamacare" taxes and health plans.
 - encouraging voters not to elect more Democratic lawmakers.

