

Showdown Looms as White House Hosts Crucial Shutdown Talks



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WASHINGTON – With less than 48 hours before a potential government shutdown, congressional leaders are set to meet President Donald Trump at the White House on Monday in a high-stakes attempt to avoid a funding lapse. The session comes after weeks of gridlock, hardened positions, and partisan clashes that have raised the likelihood of the first shutdown since 2019.

The meeting, rescheduled after Trump canceled talks last week with Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, will also include Senate Majority Leader John Thune and House Speaker Mike Johnson. While leaders say they want to avoid missing Tuesday night's deadline, both sides appear entrenched.

Thune said "fundamentally, nothing has changed," though he urged Democrats to reconsider their opposition. Schumer and Jeffries countered in a joint statement that Republicans are to blame, insisting Democrats are determined to prevent a shutdown and address what they call the "Republican healthcare crisis."

At the center of the standoff are expanded Affordable Care Act subsidies set to expire at year's end. Democrats want an agreement that secures their extension, while Republicans pressured by conservatives are refusing to tie health care to a short-term funding bill. Several GOP lawmakers, however, have floated one- or two-year extensions to avoid steep premium hikes, signaling divisions within the party.

House Republicans have adjourned until after the deadline, adding pressure on the Senate.

Democrats, meanwhile, are preparing their caucus for a fight, with Jeffries recalling members to Washington Monday evening.

The White House has instructed agencies to prepare shutdown contingency plans, including potential mass layoffs that go beyond typical furloughs. Republicans warn a shutdown could be politically painful for Democrats, as Trump will have wide discretion over which agencies remain open. But Democrats believe the party in power holding the White House and both chambers will bear the greater blame.

Whether Monday's meeting delivers a breakthrough or accelerates a shutdown remains uncertain. As one Trump official put it, "It all hinges on the meeting."