

## ***Congress eyes one-week stopgap, buying time for Covid relief talks before shutdown***

*Sahil Kapur & Leigh Ann Caldwell*

*Bipartisan talks continue on virus aid and funding the government.*



*House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., center, wears a mask at the Capitol on Friday. Stefani Reynolds / Bloomberg via Getty Images*

*WASHINGTON — Congress wants an **extra week** to negotiate government funding legislation and a **coronavirus relief bill**, according to lawmakers and aides familiar with negotiations.*

*The House is eyeing a vote Wednesday on a one-week continuing resolution to prevent a government shutdown, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Monday.*

*It would move the Dec. 11 government funding deadline to Dec. 18, one week before Christmas.*

*The deadline extension will allow for another week of talks to find bipartisan agreement on an "omnibus" spending bill to keep the government open into next year. It will also allow for another week of negotiations on another round of Covid-19 relief, which could include unemployment benefits.*

*Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he expects that the Senate will also take up a one-week stopgap bill in the hope of completing a full-year government funding package by the end of next week.*

*"I'm optimistic we're going to get somewhere, but I have no report at the moment about how," McConnell told reporters in the Capitol on Monday.*

*In the government funding bill, money for President Donald Trump's border wall is a major sticking point again. Democrats don't want the Biden administration to have to continue to build the wall, multiple sources say.*

*There is also disagreement over police reform provisions, as well as environmental policy, a source said.*

*Congressional leaders have said that if any Covid-19 aid agreement is reached, it will be attached to a government funding measure to speed passage.*

*Party leaders are negotiating the coronavirus relief package based on a \$908 billion plan unveiled last week by a bipartisan rank-and-file group. The main sticking point is a liability shield for companies and organizations, a GOP demand.*

*The emerging plan includes unemployment benefits, relief for restaurants and other small businesses and aid to state and local governments to pay teachers, police and other workers. It **does not include direct payments** to Americans, which some Democrats and Republicans are still pushing for.*

*State and local funding has also been a contentious issue, but Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., said Monday on MSNBC that the two sides are "within inches" of resolving it.*

*One provision of that will expire at the is paid family and medical leave specific to COVID, which is not part of the bipartisan framework.*

*Paid family and medical leave was approved in March. The measure reimburses through the tax system businesses with less than 500 employees that provide 10 paid sick days for employees who need to quarantine, self-isolate or care for a loved one with COVID. It also provides 10 weeks of child care for parents whose kids' schools has closed because of COVID.*

*"Obviously there's been a lot of issues that have not made it into this emergency relief negotiation and bill, because as we put this together and we laid out the \$900 billion, we were really trying to find those common ground," said Rep. Tom Reed, R-N.Y., on MSNBC's Meet the Press Daily.*

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## **House approves defense bill with veto-proof margin** *The Associated Press*

*The 335-78 vote in favor of the defense measure came hours after Trump renewed his threat to veto the bill unless lawmakers clamp down on social media companies he claims were biased against him.*



*President Donald Trump arrives for the Operation Warp Speed Vaccine Summit in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Saul Loeb / AFP - Getty Images*

*WASHINGTON — The Democratic-controlled House on Tuesday easily approved a wide-ranging defense policy bill, defying a veto threat from President Donald Trump and setting up a possible showdown with the Republican president in the waning days of his administration.*

*The 335-78 vote in favor of the \$731 billion defense measure came hours after Trump renewed his threat to veto the bill unless lawmakers clamp down on social media companies he claims were biased against him during the election.*

*Trump tweeted Tuesday that he will veto "the very weak National Defense Authorization Act," or NDAA, unless it repeals so-called Section 230, a part of the communications code that shields Twitter, Facebook and other tech giants from content liability. Trump also wants Congress to strip out a provision of the bill that allows renaming of military bases that now honor Confederate leaders.*

*Congressional leaders vowed to move ahead on the hugely popular bill — which affirms automatic 3% pay raises for U.S. troops and authorizes other military programs — despite the veto threat.*

*The final vote represented approval from more than 80% of the House — well above the two-thirds support required to override a potential veto. A total of 140 Republicans joined 195 Democrats to back the bill, which now goes to the Senate.*

*Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, a member of the House Republican leadership, urged Trump not to follow through on his veto threat, but added that if he does veto it, "We should override."*

*If Trump vetoes the bill, "we will come back to vote to override," said Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.*

*But with Trump pressuring Republicans to stand with him, it was unclear until the final tally whether the bill would receive the two-thirds support needed to override a veto. The House Freedom Caucus, a bloc of roughly three-dozen conservatives, backed Trump's position Tuesday and opposed the bill.*

*"We stand with the president," said Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., the group's chairman. "This particular NDAA bill is filled with flaws and problems," including limitations on troop withdrawals ordered by Trump in Afghanistan and Germany, Biggs said.*

*Smith and other lawmakers noted that many defense programs can only go into effect if the bill is approved, including military construction. The measure guides Pentagon policy and cements decisions about troop levels, new weapons systems and military readiness, military personnel policy and other military goals.*

*Troops should not be "punished" because politicians failed to enact needed legislation to ensure their pay, said Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas, the top Republican on the Armed Services panel. The \$731 billion measure increases hazardous duty pay for overseas deployments and other dangerous job assignments, hikes recruiting and retention bonuses and adjusts housing allowances.*

*The dispute over social media content — a battle cry of conservatives who say the social media giants treat them unfairly — interjects an unrelated but complicated issue into a bill that Congress takes pride in having passed unfailingly for nearly 60 years. It follows Trump's bid to sabotage the package with an earlier veto threat over Confederate base names.*

*Measures approved by the House and Senate would require the Pentagon to rename bases such as Fort Benning and Fort Hood named for Confederate generals, but Trump opposes the idea and has threatened a veto over it. The fight erupted this summer amid widespread protests over police killings of unarmed Black men and women, and Trump used the debate to try to appeal to white Southern voters nostalgic about the Confederacy.*

*Smith and Thornberry said in a joint statement last week that lawmakers had "toiled through almost 2,200 provisions to reach compromise on important issues affecting our national security and our military."*

*For 59 straight years, they added, the NDAA has passed because lawmakers and presidents agreed to set aside their own preferences "and put the needs of our military personnel and America's security first. The time has come to do that again."*

*The powerful Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, said he had spoken to Trump and explained that the defense bill is not the place for the big tech fight.*

*"I agree with his sentiments — we ought to do away with 230," Inhofe told reporters. "But you can't do it in this bill."*

*Trump's veto threat in the final months of his administration is his latest attempt to bend the norms. From redirecting money intended for military bases to build the border wall with Mexico to installing acting nominees in administrative positions without Senate confirmation, Trump has chipped away at the legislative branch throughout his term.*

*If he does veto the defense bill, Congress could cut short its Christmas recess to hold override votes, senior House members said.*

*"I think we can override the veto, if in fact he vetoes," House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Tuesday before the vote. "I hope he does not veto, I hope he reconsiders. And I think he will get substantial pressure, advice (from Republicans) that, you know, you don't want to put the defense bill at risk."*

*White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump's attempt to pressure Congress on Section 230 was justified.*

*"Twitter has become a publisher, choosing to fact-check content," she said. "And when you're a publisher, there are certain responsibilities with that and you should not be immune from liability."*

*Past presidents have certainly threatened to veto defense bills, which set annual policy with troop levels, equipment priorities, pay raises and other matters.*

*The defense bill is typically a widely bipartisan measure, one of the few areas of common ground. Over the summer, the Senate approved its version, 86-14, while the House similarly passed its effort, with opposition coming mostly from the liberal and conservative flanks.*

*Trump's allies on Capitol Hill, including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, have railed against the social media companies, especially during the heated November election. McCarthy, R-Calif., voted for the bill Tuesday but said he would not support overriding the veto.*

*Some Democrats, including Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, agree the Section 230 provision could be revisited, even as they disagree with Trump's tactic of attaching it to the defense bill.*

*[The Associated Press](#)*