



Senate Passes Short-Term Spending Bill to Avoid Shutdown

The federal government was again just days away from a potential shutdown when the Senate passed another spending bill which critics say is strewn with far too much spending. The legislation includes money for victims of Hurricane Irene and the summer tornados, and funds the federal government at the start of the new budget year, which begins on Saturday.



The resolution was approved by the Senate after a series of behind-the-scenes discussions which ultimately ended the latest round of vicious debates between Democrats and Republicans over items such as spending, cuts, and taxes. According to The Blaze, those disputes have rattled financial markets and coincided with polls showing congressional approval ratings at historically low levels.

The bill passed the Senate by a bipartisan vote of 79-12. The measure is now on its way to the House of Representatives for a vote, though there is little doubt it will pass there, as Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has already indicated that it is acceptable. I think its a reasonable way to keep the government operational, he commented.

Likewise, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (above) commented, This compromise should satisfy Republicans and it should satisfy Democrats. Its a win for everyone.

The House of Representatives attempted to pass a spending bill last week, but the measure [failed](#) in a surprising vote of 230 to 195. Democrats in the House rejected the bill because of the spending cuts it proposed to a government loan program which would help companies build fuel-efficient vehicles, while GOP conservatives felt the legislation cut too little and spent too much.

House Speaker John Boehner was left with the difficult position of deciding whom to appease his fellow Republicans or disgruntled Democrats.

Congress was motivated to come to some sort of agreement after the Federal Emergency Management Agency reported that it had only enough disaster-relief money to last through Friday. FEMA spokeswoman Rachel Racusen indicated that the agency currently has \$114 million in its relief fund, which will likely last until Thursday or Friday depending on the number of emergency victims who apply for aid, and whether any new disasters occur.

The revelation that the disaster aid fund would run out later in the week, rather than the earlier date previously stated, allowed lawmakers to reach an agreement by removing \$1 billion from the legislation, which virtually ended the showdown. The increased spending for FEMA applies only to the



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new fiscal year, as the agency does not need extra funding for the current year.

Still, even as the Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement, the Senate floor remained highly contentious.

Senator McConnell accused Democrats of fear-mongering over funding for disaster victims. In my view, this entire fire drill was completely unnecessary, he declared.

Similarly, Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La.) targeted House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.), asserting that the controversy over the spending bill began because Cantor insisted that the bill be funded by spending cuts. She scathingly referred to the Majority Leaders philosophy as the Cantor Doctrine and claimed that the entire ordeal could have been avoided if Cantor had just said, Im sorry, but I made a mistake. But instead of saying that, he doubled down, she charged.

Cantor spokeswoman Laena Fallon responded by pointing out that Cantor never said the things she alleged, but that he merely suggested that we ought to provide disaster aid dollars to those who need them in a responsible way something that shes voted to block despite the urgent need.

Moreover, Cantor was not the only Republican to make such a declaration. Most of the GOP lawmakers asserted that any money allocated to disaster aid should be offset by cuts elsewhere in the budget.

The U.S. House of Representatives is on a week-long break, so how the measure can be cleared for a presidential signature remains unknown. The Blaze explains, Among the options are passage of a temporary funding measure, to be passed in a brief session of the House planned for Thursday, that would keep government agencies in funds until lawmakers return on Oct. 4. The Senate approved the bill without objections. Another option is for the GOP to call the House back into session this week for a vote.

Regardless of how it is implemented, the approved measure will fund the federal government through November 18.

The debate over the stopgap measure became heated when House Republicans agreed to provide \$1 billion for disaster aid, while demanding spending cuts elsewhere in the budget by \$1.5 billion to prevent the deficit from rising. Immediately, Senate Democrats rejected the proposal and the cuts.

Meanwhile, FEMA has placed on hold long-term items such as reconstruction of damaged roads, at an estimated cost of \$450 million. At the same time, the agency has been able to reclaim some money allocated for past disasters which was unused.



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