



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 2, 2019

Government Shutdown: A Referendum on the Border Wall

The battle over border security is reaching a critical point as the new Congress is set to take over on January 3. President Trump has vowed not to sign a new budget or any continuing resolution (CR) in order to end the government shutdown unless it has \$5 billion in funding for his proposed border wall. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), the expected new speaker of the House, has pledged not to fund a border wall.



Ever the fence straddler, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), is holding his cards close to the vest, wondering which way the wind is going to blow.

At a press conference in early December, Pelosi blasted the notion of a border wall as “immoral,” and not needed for border security. “Most of us, speaking for myself, consider the wall immoral, ineffective, and the president said he promised it. He also promised that Mexico would pay for it. So, even if they did, it’s immoral still.”

“We have a responsibility, all of us, to secure our borders — north, south and coming in by plane ... and that’s a responsibility we honor, but we do so by honoring our values as well.”

Trump, who won the presidency in 2016 largely on his promise to build a wall on the southern border, is similarly dug in. On December 20, he [tweeted](#), “When I begrudgingly signed the Omnibus Bill, I was promised the Wall and Border Security by leadership. Would be done by the end of the year (NOW). It didn’t happen! We foolishly fight for Border Security for other countries — but not for our beloved U.S.A. Not good!”

In an [extremely odd and contentious meeting](#) in front of cameras at the White House on December 11, President Trump signaled that he was ready to shut down the government unless a new budget or CR contained \$5 billion in funding for a border wall. Speaking to Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Trump said, “I am proud to shut down the government for border security, Chuck, because the people of this country don’t want criminals and people that have lots of problems and drugs pouring into our country. So, I will take the mantle. I will be the one to shut it down. I’m not going to blame you for it. The last time you shut it down, it didn’t work. I will take the mantle of shutting it down.”

The House of Representatives has already prepared legislation intended to end the current government shutdown, which is now in its second week. The two-bill package contains no funding for the president’s proposed border wall. “We’re going to do our job,” said Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), who is expected to be the chairman of the House Rules Committee. “The president should take “yes” for an answer and go back to tweeting.”

The Senate and Mitch McConnell had the power to end all this posturing in advance of the shutdown by using the so-called “nuclear option” to end debate with a simple majority rather than the 60 votes Senate rules call for. Trump had urged McConnell to do so in a tweet, “Mitch, use the nuclear option and get it done! Our country is counting on you!”



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But McConnell spokesman David Popp said that the nuclear option was not on the table because the necessary votes to change the rule were not available. “The Leader has said for years that the votes are not there in the Conference to use the nuclear option. Just this morning, several senators put out statements confirming their opposition, and confirming that there is not a majority in the conference to go down that road.”



So, here we sit on the eve of the 116th Congress. The government is shut down and battle lines are clearly drawn over a single issue — the border wall. President Trump calls the wall “necessary” and presumed Speaker Pelosi calls it “immoral.” Whoever wins this battle will gain the public’s perception of being “in charge” in Washington. It’s not a battle Trump can afford to lose, since the border wall was his biggest campaign promise. But if Pelosi caves, she will be allowing something she has called “immoral” to happen.

A prolonged government shutdown hurts mainly government employees, about 800,000 of whom won’t get paychecks during the time it lasts. Past shutdowns have taught us that Social Security checks still go out, the military still functions, and the mail still gets delivered. This is the time for Trump to dig in his heels.

It’s a referendum of sorts over the border wall. While we’re not really voting on whether a wall should be built, we can have a say in this battle. Public perception will be key. While the Democrats have globalists and a compliant mainstream media on their sides, conservatives have common sense and their telephones on their side.

If you want the wall, give your congressman a call.

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