



House Approves One-Week Extension of Resolution Funding DHS

By a vote of 357-60, the House of Representatives on February 27 approved an amendment to last December's continuing resolution that funded the Department of Homeland Security through that date — extending DHS funding through March 6.

Friday's vote was taken to allow the House to concur with an amendment to H.R. 33 (the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act) agreed to in the Senate by unanimous consent earlier that same day. The amendment (SA 268) was proposed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and extended the original expiration for DHS funding found in the continuing resolution passed as part of the 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Act ("cromnibus") by one week.



The vote came after 10 p.m., less than two hours before DHS funding expired at midnight. President Obama signed the bill 10 minutes before the deadline.

This one-week extension is a stopgap measure to ensure that DHS employees will not have an interruption in pay while the ongoing dispute between Democrats and Republicans in Congress over DHS funding is ironed out.

Though congressional supporters of unrestricted DHS funding often tout the dangers to national security that might result from the department's shutdown, that is a highly unlikely scenario. An article in the *Washington Post* for February 24 noted:

Democrats and the Obama administration are raising concerns about shutting down the department at a time of worldwide security threats, but such rhetoric is at times overblown. In reality, a shutdown would only be a partial shutdown.

Of the department's 230,000 employees, some 200,000 of them would continue to report to work even if the department is not funded, because they are deemed essential for the protection of human life and property....

However, those workers would go without a paycheck until the dispute is resolved.

The Hill reported that earlier in the day, before the one-week extension passed, the House rejected a three-week funding bill by a vote of 203-224. That this bill failed in the Republican-controlled House was a result of House Democratic leaders pressuring their members to reject the legislation, along with opposition from 52 Republicans who refused to vote for any DHS bill that did not defund implementation of President Obama's and DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson's executive actions on deferred



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deportations for illegal immigrants.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) supported the temporary DHS funding, which was responsible for the very large margin by which it passed. In fact, 55 of the 60 votes against the bill came from Republicans.

That apparent motivation for Pelosi's and her fellow Democrats' support for the one-week stopgap measure was their anticipation that Congress will soon approve a "clean" DHS funding measure that does not include restrictions on the Obama administration's executive actions on immigration found in the House's original legislation.

"Your vote tonight will assure that we will vote for full funding next week," the *New York Times* quoted from a letter Pelosi sent to House Democrats on Friday night urging them to support the seven-day funding measure offered by Representative Harold "Hal" Rogers (R-Ky.).

This latest round in the ongoing fight between members of Congress allied with Obama and those who are opposed to last November's administration actions granting amnesty to million of illegal immigrants continues a legislative battle that began on January 14 when the House passed the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2015 (H.R. 240) by a vote of 236-191. H.R. 240 would deny funding for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which the Obama administration expanded by means of an executive action memorandum sent by Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson on November 20 to the heads of USCIS, ICE, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

H.R. 240 was received in the Senate on January 16, but with 54 senators, Republicans lack the 60 votes needed to end a Democratic filibuster preventing a vote on the measure. Republicans have failed four times (on February 3, 4, 5, and 23) to achieve the necessary supermajority to end debate and bring H.R. 240 up for a vote.

After the last failed vote on February 23, Majority Leader McConnell suggested a separate vote on the portion of the DHS budget that funds DACA before voting on the overall DHS funding bill. This plan would force senators to cast a vote either in support of the executive actions extending DACA or against them, without the issue of funding the DHS impacting how their votes might be interpreted.

On February 27, the same day the House approved the temporary DHS funding measure, the Senate approved an amended version of H.R. 240, by a vote of 68-31, that does not defund the administration's executive amnesty actions. However, since this differs from the House version, the House sent the following message to the Senate asking for a conference to reconcile the two versions:

Resolved, That the House disagree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 240) "An Act making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes," and ask a conference with the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon.

The end of the battle is not in sight, however. The *Huffington Post* reported:

The issue of going to conference on the DHS funding bill is more fraught. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) has said his caucus will not allow for a conference on the DHS bill, [while] House Republicans are seeking to compromise on funding the department while also restricting Obama's immigration measures. The immigration order, Democrats say, is not up for discussion.

The *Post* also noted that Representative Steve King (R-Iowa), one of the most vocal critics of the



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administration's immigration policies, blamed McConnell for weakening the Republican Party's negotiating power by offering to fund DHS with no strings attached.

"I would have liked to see Mitch McConnell fight a lot harder," King said. "He tipped over his king in a surprise move. He didn't make any moves for a long time, he waited until they looked at the calendar and strategically decided to jam the House."

As we noted in a recent article, McConnell's willingness to compromise by removing the tough House anti-amnesty provisions from the DHS funding bill merely gives the Democrats what they have asked for all along. *The Hill* on January 29 quoted a White House official who issued a statement reading, "The president will join the Democrats in Congress in vehemently opposing that dangerous view and calling for a clean funding bill to ensure we are funding our national security priorities in the face of cybersecurity and security threats abroad."

McConnell has offered Democrats a bill that is so "clean" of restrictions on the administration's executive amnesty orders that they are willing to support it. This says much about the GOP's role as the "opposition" party to the Obama administration. House Republicans, however, have stood their ground more solidly than their Senate colleagues.

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