

Democrats are rejecting Trump's immigration deal for 3 glaring reasons, and it shows just how far apart the 2 sides still are

Michelle Mark and Bob Bryan

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- The Senate is set to vote on two dueling bills on Thursday that would end the government shutdown – and both are almost guaranteed to fail.
- Republicans released a bill backed by President Donald Trump on Monday that would fund his border wall but also overhaul much of the asylum system.
- Democrats immediately condemned the proposal, accusing Republicans and Trump of negotiating in bad faith by including “poison pills” in the bill.

A bitter stalemate between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats is expected to hit a new low Thursday, as the Senate prepares to vote on two dueling bills to end the government shutdown. Both appear destined to fail.

The votes come after the Senate leaders Mitch McConnell and Chuck Schumer brokered a Tuesday agreement to bring their respective plans to the floor.

The Democrats' plan, already passed by the House, would reopen the government with no border-wall funding.

In December, before the shutdown, the Republican-controlled Senate passed a similar bill unanimously. But Republicans have held the line since Trump abruptly announced his refusal to sign a bill that lacked wall funding – kicking off the shutdown. Thus far, McConnell has not brought a spending bill without wall funding to the floor.

The GOP bill is fashioned from a plan introduced by Trump on Saturday, which the president billed as a “common-sense compromise.” The measure would open the government, secure funding for a wall along the southern US border, long promised to his political base, and make limited concessions on extending temporary protections for some immigrants.

But the supposed “compromise” measure has little chance at passing. Democrats balked at the proposal as soon as it was released. Democratic skepticism increased after Senate Republicans released text of the proposed legislation on Monday evening. The bill contains a slew of unexpected and severe cuts to the US asylum system and other immigration programs that Democrats considered “poison pills.”

Overhauls US asylum, especially for Central American children

The bill's most stunning change to asylum law was a rule that unaccompanied children from Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) would be required to apply for US asylum at not-yet-established processing centers in Central America, rather than journeying to the US-Mexico border to apply for asylum and wait in the US for their cases to be heard.

If the bill were passed, it would mean nearly all unaccompanied children who arrive at the US border seeking asylum would be immediately deported back to their home countries.

Beyond that, the GOP bill would add a 50,000-person cap on the number of asylum applications the US government accepts, with a further cap of 15,000 on the number of applications granted.

Customs and Border Protection arrested more than 50,000 unaccompanied minors in the 2018 fiscal year, who then requested asylum.

“The administration hopes that this will deter people from coming to the United States. It's unclear whether that would work,” Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a policy analyst at the American Immigration Council, told INSIDER. “People who are in fear for their life often are willing to accept a lesser form of status, if it saves their lives. So many may still come anyway. It's hard to tell that this would even have the deterrent effect that the administration hopes it would have.”

Narrows protections for Dreamers

Democrats also faulted Trump over the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals proposal offered in the bill. The GOP bill offers a three-year extension to the popular program that shields some young unauthorized immigrants, known as Dreamers, from deportation and allows them to work legally, which the Democrats believe is not enough.

The bill's text also contains several other provisions that would dramatically restrict the program. The bill would limit the pool of eligible Dreamers to the roughly 700,000 immigrants who already have DACA protections, rather than the estimated 1.8 million who might qualify. They would also have to reapply, rather than renew their application as is currently the policy. The proposed application process would also be more stringent, NBC News explains, with applicants having to meet a higher annual income if they are not students and pay a higher application fee.

Instead of extending DACA protections for Dreamers, the bill “replaces it with a totally different program that will exclude untold thousands of Dreamers who would have been eligible under DACA,” according to David Bier, an immigration policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute.

Trump ended DACA in 2017, but it has remained in place because of federal court rulings, and on Tuesday the Supreme Court declined to review the program.

Slashes Temporary Protected Status

Temporary Protected Status is given by the Department of Homeland security to those who cannot return safely to their home country. The GOP bill extends TPS by three years for roughly 300,000 immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

But it leaves behind immigrants from five other countries for whom Trump terminated protections, and as a result their TPS status has either lapsed or will expire without congressional action.

The Trump administration has rescinded TPS for immigrants from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Nepal, and Sudan over the past two years, and the Trump-backed bill would do nothing to reinstate their protections.

The bill would also overhaul the TPS application process adding a higher evidentiary burden on immigrants to prove they're eligible for protections and significantly increasing the financial burden on applicants.

A 'lack of good faith'

While the original outline that Trump proposed was rejected by Democratic leaders, some analysts believed that the suggestions showed a pathway forward for talks coming out of the weekend.

"Both parties are still dug in publicly, but in private there's some movement on two key issues – the Democrats could accept funding for a border barrier, and the Republicans could bend further on the issue of protection for the so-called Dreamers," Greg Valliere, the chief global strategist at Horizon Investments, wrote in a note to clients.

But as more details came out about the proposal, Democrats argued that the GOP bill was not even close to a compromise and designed to fail to make Trump appear to be offering concessions.

"No one – no one – can call this a new effort at compromise," Schumer, the Senate minority leader, said in a statement. "The asylum changes are a poison pill if there ever was one, and show the lack of good faith that the president, and now Leader McConnell, have in trying to make a proposal."

White House officials even said privately that they added controversial provisions to the bill they knew Democrats would balk at, according to The New York Times.

So despite the "compromise" attempt and scheduled votes in the Senate, the two parties will be just as far apart as ever if the bills fail as expected.