



Trump's border wall obsession is going to shut down the government

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January 19, 2018

President Trump's zigzagging on immigration reform as the country careens toward a Friday night government shutdown deadline has Congress frustrated.

The Senate has until midnight to pass a temporary spending bill to keep the government operating through mid-February, but Democrats are withholding support unless Republicans agree to vote on an immigration bill with protections for immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

A group of bipartisan senators have a bill they thought the president would back based on his comments last week. But after the infamous "shithole" meeting, no one can pin the White House down on immigration reform, making the possibility of a shutdown imminent.

"Their demands are nebulous, their messaging makes no sense, they continuously move the ball," said David Bier, a policy analyst at the conservative CATO institute. "I think it's a sign that the administration doesn't want a deal."

Last Tuesday, Trump zigged, **saying** he would like to do a clean immigration bill that provides protections for immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children. Then on Thursday, Trump zagged during a meeting about bipartisan immigration reform legislation with Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Dick Durbin (D-IL): "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" **he asked**.

This week Trump doubled down on his disapproval for the Graham-Durbin immigration plan, **calling it** "horrible" and "very, very weak."

One reason for the whiplash could be a memo that White House staff gave to the president before last Thursday's meeting. The memo, **obtained and reviewed by Axios**, lists five objections to the bill: it fails to secure the border, increases illegal immigration, grants legal status to parents of "Dreamers," increases chain migration and fails to end the visa lottery.

In fact, the bill includes \$2.7 billion for border security, prohibits citizenship for parents of "Dreamers", limits the number of family members a U.S. resident can sponsor, and terminates the diversity visa lottery program, allocating those visas for a merit-based system.

“The idea that they gave the president everything that he asked for, these are dramatic things that are going to have a permanent effect on our immigration system,” said Kamal Essaheb, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the National Immigration Law Center. “For the president to just scoff at that and say that’s weak, it’s just beyond words.”

Mick Mulvaney, the head of the Office of Management and Budget, defended Trump’s efforts on immigration in a press conference Friday. “There’s no way you can lay this at the feet of the president of the U.S.,” he said. “He’s actively working to try to get a deal.”

Trump invited Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York to the White House Friday afternoon to work out a deal, but this bipartisan immigration bill is already as far to the right as Democrats are likely willing to go.

“I think he’s getting some really bad advice,” Bier said. “It’s a negotiation at this point over things that are so far from the realm of consideration on the Democratic side that you’re never going to get a deal as long as the president continues to listen to this advice.”