



## **Nobody can accuse Trump of colluding, or even negotiating, with Congress**

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Negotiating important agreements turns out not to be President Donald Trump's strong suit.

Both houses of Congress are supposed to work out bills and budgets with him. Trump and his aides, however, keep finding other ways to stage his own show, separate from the realities of the legislative system.

A new round of gridlock looms in the coming months over the nation's debt ceiling, spending and the potential for automatic cuts to programs. There is even talk on Capitol Hill of another possible multiagency shutdown in the fall for failure to reach agreement.

Democrats would like to raise the debt ceiling and budget caps in one large deal with Republicans. The White House makes no assurances of cooperation.

An administration official told Politico: "We've been saying that we should move beyond these unaffordable, dollar-for-dollar caps deals that hold defense spending ransom to billions of dollars in wasteful discretionary spending."

Even a House GOP official said: "I'm fearful. It's going to be really ugly."

At one point, Trump was going to accept protection from deportation for those brought illegally to the U.S. as children in exchange for border-wall funds. That went nowhere.

Then the president was going to allow a budget deal without a wall, but suddenly reversed course and forced a record-long shutdown of government agencies. Then he caved and signed a budget measure without winning the wall funding.

Now he is trying to divert billions of dollars in military funds to barrier construction by declaring an "emergency" and ignoring bipartisan objections. That plan, now in court, seems unlikely to get construction moving.

After the Democrats won the House in November, Trump talked of negotiating with them.

"The Democrats will come to us with a plan for infrastructure, a plan for health care, a plan for whatever they're looking at and we'll negotiate," Trump said.

Notice the passive role he assigned himself: "The Democrats will come to us ..."

No hints of serious talks have surfaced.

Trump blames lawmakers for immigration laws he dislikes. But there is no sign he's trying to sell them a practical measure with a chance to pass.

In several cases, Trump tried to enforce policies without approval from either house's majority caucus. His travel ban from mostly Muslim countries was modified twice before the Supreme Court eventually upheld it. The travel ban was first billed as a temporary move while a new "extreme vetting" system was created.

One year ago, the right-of-center Cato Institute released a study that concluded: "The government needs to remain on the lookout for potential threats, but the evidence indicates that its existing processes are already succeeding in weeding out terrorists." Those processes were imposed after 9/11, the report said.

As expected, any plans for comprehensive immigration reform, a new infrastructure program, and health-care insurance changes are adrift in the halls of Congress.

Meantime, it goes generally unnoticed that the White House seems to neither prod nor court Congress on its stated priorities. This appeared true well before Democrats won the House in November, making them Trump's most powerful partisan adversaries.