

US government on brink of first shutdown in almost 7 years during partisan standoff

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP) — With a government shutdown just hours away, Democrats and Republicans angrily blamed each other and refused to budge from their positions Tuesday, unable to find agreement or even negotiate as hundreds of thousands of federal workers stood to be furloughed or laid off.

The partisan standoff over health care and spending is threatening to trigger the first U.S. government shutdown in almost seven years at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday. To avoid it, the Senate would have to pass a House measure that would extend federal funding for seven weeks while lawmakers finish their work on annual spending bills.

A vote on the bill, along with a Democratic alternative, was scheduled for early evening. But a resolution appeared far off as tempers flared, increasing the odds of a shutdown by the hour.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Republicans are trying to “bully” Democrats by refusing to negotiate on an extension of health care benefits and other priorities.

“It’s only the president who can do this. We know he runs the show here,” Schumer said Tuesday morning, after a bipartisan White House meeting the day before yielded little progress.

“Republicans have until midnight tonight to get serious with us,” Schumer said.

President Donald Trump and his fellow Republicans say they won’t entertain any changes to the legislation, arguing that it’s a stripped-down, “clean” bill that should be noncontroversial.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Republicans “are not going to be held

hostage” by the Democrats’ demands. The GOP-led House was on a weeklong recess, unavailable for immediate votes even if the Senate did find bipartisan agreement. And far from entering into negotiations, Trump instead posted a fake, mocking video of Democrats on Monday evening after the White House meeting.

On Tuesday, Trump threatened retribution, saying a shutdown could include “cutting vast numbers of people out, cutting things that they like, cutting programs that they like.”

It was still unclear if either side would blink before the deadline.

BLAME GAME ESCALATES

While partisan stalemates over government spending are a frequent occurrence in Washington, the current impasse comes as Democrats see a rare opportunity to use their leverage to achieve policy goals and as their base voters are spoiling for a fight with Trump. Republicans who hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate would likely need at least eight votes from Democrats to end a filibuster and pass the bill with 60 votes, since Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky is expected to vote against it.

Still, Schumer said Trump and Republicans would be to blame if the government shuts down.

A handful of Democrats said they were still deciding how to vote, holding out for a last-minute compromise. Thune said he is “hoping there are Democrats out there who are reasonable and understand what’s at stake here.”

The last shutdown was in Trump’s first term, from December 2018 to January 2019, when he demanded that Congress give him money for his U.S.-Mexico border wall. Trump retreated after 35 days

— the longest shutdown ever — amid intensifying airport delays and missed paydays for federal workers.

DEMOCRATS’ HEALTH CARE ASKS

Millions of people could face higher insurance premiums if the health care subsidies expire at the end of the year. Congress first put them in place in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, to expand coverage for low- and middle-income people who purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

Democrats say they want the subsidies immediately extended. They have also demanded that Republicans reverse the Medicaid cuts that were enacted as a part of Trump’s “big, beautiful bill” this summer and for the White House to promise it will not move to rescind spending passed by Congress.

“We are not going to support a partisan Republican spending bill that continues to gut the health care of everyday Americans,” House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said.

Thune has pressed Democrats to vote for the funding bill and take up the debate on tax credits later. Some Republicans are open to extending the tax credits, but many are strongly opposed to it.

In rare, pointed back-and-forth with Schumer on the Senate floor Tuesday morning, Thune said Republicans “are happy to fix the ACA issue” and have offered to negotiate with Democrats — if they will vote to keep the government open until Nov. 21.

NO AGREEMENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE

The bipartisan meeting at the White House on Monday was Trump’s first with all four leaders in Congress since retaking the White House for his second term. Schumer said the group “had candid, frank discussions” about health care and the potential for health

insurance costs to skyrocket once expanded Affordable Care Act tax credits expire Dec. 31.

But Trump did not appear to be ready for serious talks. Hours later, he posted a fake video of Schumer and Jeffries taken from footage of their real press conference outside the White House after the meeting. In the altered video, a voiceover that sounds like Schumer’s voice makes fun of Democrats and Jeffries stands beside him with a cartoon sombrero and mustache. Mexican music plays in the background.

At a news conference on the Capitol steps Tuesday morning, Jeffries said it was a “racist and fake AI video.”

Schumer said that “we have less than a day to figure this out” and Trump is trolling on the Internet “like a 10-year-old.”

A CRITICAL, AND UNUSUAL, VOTE FOR DEMOCRATS

Democrats are in an uncomfortable position for a party that has long denounced shutdowns as pointless and destructive, and it’s unclear how or when it would end. But party activists and voters have argued that Democrats need to do something to stand up to Trump.

Some groups called for Schumer’s resignation in March after he and nine other Democrats voted to break a filibuster and allow a Republican-led funding bill to advance to a final vote.

Schumer said then that he voted to keep the government open because a shutdown would have made things worse as Trump’s administration was slashing government jobs. He says now that he believes things have changed, including the passage this summer of the massive GOP tax cut bill that reduced Medicaid.

Worship leader Sean Feucht mismanaged millions in ministry funds

DEEPA BHARATH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The star of Sean Feucht — once a little-known conservative Christian worship leader and musician — began to climb in 2020 as he challenged government restrictions brought on by the coronavirus’ tightening grip on the world.

At well-attended protest concerts that brazenly flouted social distancing rules, he became a poster child against public health regulations curtailing in-person religious practice. It put Feucht in league with high-profile conservative pundits and elected officials from President Donald Trump to conservative influencer Charlie Kirk and Pete Hegseth, now the secretary of defense.

Alongside his Christian rockstar status, revenue to Feucht’s ministry also skyrocketed, jumping from \$243,000 in 2019 to \$5 million in 2020 — the last year his ministry filed a Form 990 with the IRS. It’s that deluge of money, Feucht’s and his ministry’s amassing of expensive real estate in its wake and their lack of financial transparency, which has former ministry staff and volunteers now accusing the worship leader of mismanaging ministry funds.

Three former associates with Feucht’s worship organizations, such as Burn 24-7, Let Us Worship and Light a Candle, shared details with The Associated Press about Feucht’s alleged financial mismanagement, verbal abuse and overworking volunteers and staff without fair wages.

Christy Gafford, the former national director and communications lead for Sean Feucht Ministries, said

she was fired in May 2024 after demanding accountability and questioning why volunteers had to pay for Feucht to come to their communities.

“I would get very vague answers,” said Gafford, who served for eight years in various roles, including leading a Texas chapter of Burn 24-7. She believes those answers because the Charismatic Christian world emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in the form of spiritual gifts, and that faith leaders embody that spirit. “You’re supposed to put your trust in your leaders.”

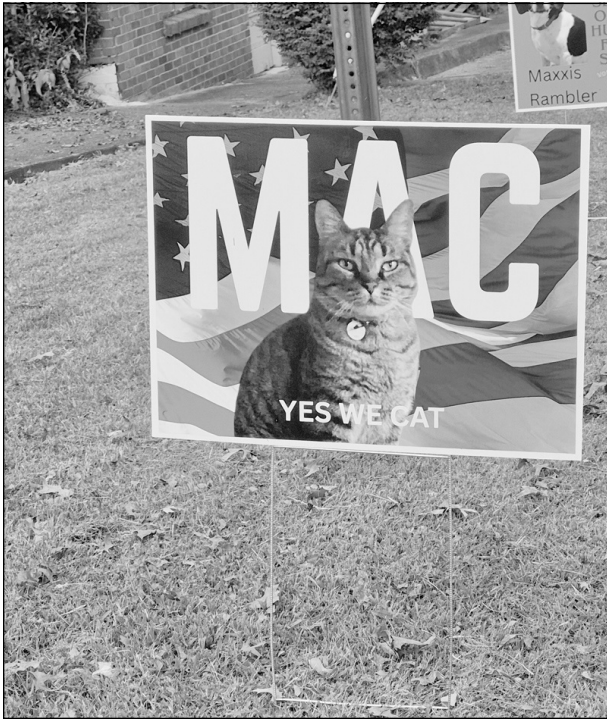
After being fired, Gafford began questioning why more money wasn’t used for local ministry initiatives when millions of dollars were spent by Feucht and his organization on real estate.

Feucht, who did not respond to the AP’s repeated requests for comment, dismissed these allegations as false in a social media video posted in June. He called them “embittered, upset, angered former volunteers” who had no knowledge of the ministry’s financial situation and “had to be dismissed because of moral issues.”

“We’re in great standing with the IRS, with our accountants,” he said. “Every single penny you have donated has gone to fulfill kingdom-ordained purpose and I stand by that.”

REAL ESTATE ACQUISITIONS QUESTIONED

Feucht said his ministry has spent money on visits to all 50 state capitals and about 30 other U.S. cities, purchased a tour bus and sound systems for concerts, and acquired real estate around the country.



Submitted

Mac the cat is doing his part to advertise for this weekend’s Blessing of the Animals.

BLESSING

CONTINUED FROM 1

hamburgers, chicken fingers and “all the fixings.”

The Somerset area has been holding this event for several years, and Pogue said she has participated with her pet in the past.

“There was one year it was actually held at the Judicial Center, out around the fountain. I took my pup and she got a blessing. She always wants all the attention, so that made her day,” Pogue said.

Saturday’s event will also serve as a benefit for three area pet rescue groups: The Somerset-Pulaski County Humane Society, Hope for All Pets, Inc. and Kentucky Saving Them Together.

Donations will be accepted and shared among all three groups.

Pogue said that if someone preferred to bring items instead of money, she believed that dog food, cat food and kitty litter would be accepted. “I’m sure that

would be appreciated, and it will be put to good use,” she said.

“And, if anyone is thinking about adding to their family, Blessed Adoptable Animals will be there as well,” she said.

Pogue said there is limited parking in the church’s parking lot, so most people will likely want to park along West Columbia Street or, if they are able to walk a short distance, park behind the Pulaski County Courthouse.

The event is free, and will also feature a Kidz Korner, which will include story time, coloring pages and more.

Oh, and those election posters? Pay attention to what each furry critter is running for. Doogie Bowser, also known as Rex, promises to allow fellow dogs to “Bark and be Heard,” whereas Birdie is running on the platform of “Nap Time 4 All.”

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FALLOWEEN

CONTINUED FROM 1

the spooky season in general rather than just the zombie genre.

“We’re moving away from Pulaski County Walker Weekend, because zombies are not quite as couture as they were,” said SJWC’s Wynona Padgett with a laugh. “We have been adding more and more to make it more like a fall festival.

“Most people, even in costume, are not zombies,” she added. “We don’t even do a zombie costume contest, we just do a costume contest.”

As such, when the event that was known as “Walker Weekend” returns this Saturday, it will be under a new name: Pulaski County Falloween.

Make no mistake: The actual “Zombie Walk” parade of characters and costumes will still take place, as well as the “Thriller” dance and other popular elements of the event. But in recent years, organizers have been leaning more into the fun of things like candy apples and hayrides to go along with the overall Halloween vibe, and the event’s branding will reflect that starting this year.

“We will never get rid of the zombie walk,” she added, referencing the specific part of the event towards the end of the evening each year that serves as a sort of parade for all those in costume. “That’s always going to be a part of it, but the difference is that we’re trying to bring a little more of the fall festival atmosphere

into it.”

The event is free to attend for all ages and runs from 2 p.m. (other than the earlier Zombie Ride and Chili Cook-Off) to 10:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 4 at Eubank City Park on Ky. 70.

Many of the popular parts of the event will return for 2025. The Storyteller — a kid-friendly spinner of terrifying tales with valuable lessons, clad in robe and skeletal mask — will give his presentation at 4:30 p.m. Saturday after appearing at the Shine House in downtown Somerset the night before (Friday, October 3) for Scary Stories and other Tales, presented by Watershed Arts Alliance, beginning at 6 p.m.

Food is always a big part of the event, and perhaps nothing captures the spirit of the season more than the Creepy Cake Contest, full of confections decorated with the likes of edible spiders, skulls and monsters. The cakes will be judged at 4:30 p.m. in the main shelter, and auctioned off afterward to benefit the Somerset-Pulaski County Humane Society. Those cakes can serve as dessert for the chili cook-off at 12:30 p.m. — chili will be judged at 1 p.m. and sold at 2 p.m. — and there’s also the Little Debbie Cake Walk for all ages at 2:45 p.m.

New this year is a pie making contest at the main shelter for all ages starting at 2 p.m. — after judging of pies that people bring, pieces will be sold for \$3 each to raise money for Hope for All Pets Inc. — and a S’mores Station

at the park gazebo from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., featuring \$5 S’mores packs for two people.

A pet costume contest is at the main shelter at 6:15 p.m., followed by contests for the most Marvelous Mullet, Bodacious Beard and Mighty Moustache. The costume contest for teens ages 13 and up and adults starts at 9 p.m. and the Cosplay Costume Contest for all ages at 9:15 p.m. These follow the actual Zombie Walk through the woods at 8:30 p.m. — kids under 10 must have an adult with them — and Thriller Dance led by Pep & Pizzazz at 8:15 p.m.; a rehearsal will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the basketball courts.

Good causes are also a big part of the event. The day starts at 11 a.m. with a registration for the Zombie Ride for motorcycles, taking donations for the Lake Cumberland Children’s Advocacy Center, and the ride begins at noon. The Zombie Walk Blood Drive for ages 17 and up, 16 with parental consent, lasts from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and the Let’s Scare Hunger Away Food Drive accepts canned food items at the main shelter starting at 2 p.m.

It wouldn’t be Halloween without fun-sized sweets, and there are multiple opportunities for kids to get candy at a variety of parked vehicles in a trunk-or-treat setting starts with Trucks, Tractors, Trunks and Treats at 2 p.m. going until 4 p.m., and continues with Jeeps Creepers for Jeeps exclusively from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

New attractions this year

include kid-sized train rides, a mechanical bull, and cornhole tournaments, all at 2 p.m., family-friendly hayrides for \$5 per person from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m., and a Falloween Dance Party for all ages at the main shelter from 7:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.

“Last year, kind of by accident, we found out that the kids really enjoy dancing to music, so we’re going to have a little dance party as well,” said Padgett.

Live music will be provided by Statelaw (at 5:30 p.m., making their debut at the event), Potential Alibi (at 7 p.m.), and Gravel Switch (at 9:30 p.m.), and afterparty festivities for the Cumberland Con event for fans of the paranormal and comics books will also take place at Falloween during the evening, as Cumberland Con will take place on October 4 as well.

As usual, a large number of vendors, selling all kinds of treats to eat, goods to buy, and information to benefit from will be on hand at Eubank Park for Falloween as well.

A full schedule of events along with a swarm of extra information is available on the “Pulaski County Falloween with Zombie Walk” Facebook page.

“So far, everything has been going really well,” said Padgett. “We are excited about the new contests and new bands coming on board with all the favorite contests and returning entertainers. The weather is going to be amazing on Saturday, and that will help bring out a bigger crowd!”

DYEHOUSE

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have been accurate.

But some parents who were upset at not being given a call from the school about the situation posted a discussion on social media. When that happened, Dyehouse said he agreed to have a meeting with those parents at the school

auditorium Tuesday morning.

Dyehouse said about 60 people turned up for the meeting that lasted around an hour and a half.

“I should have let them know with a One Call. ... I should have looked ahead and done that,” he said. “I let myself get too busy that Thursday night before the Fall Festival. I could have done it over the weekend, and I just failed to do it. I

thought I had it already taken care of it, and I left out the most important part, and that was notifying parents.”

On the discussion of the student’s punishment, Dyehouse said, “I’m not allowed to talk about another parent’s child to other parents. That’s a confidentiality thing. I had to be really careful about how I said it. But most of them knew from their kids telling

them what they thought the discipline was or what had happened, and most weren’t satisfied. They thought more should have been done.”

Dyehouse said that there were no issues with fifth graders during Tuesday’s classroom hours.

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