

# White House warns of ‘imminent’ mass layoffs in government shutdown

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WASHINGTON — Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday the administration is looking for ways to get a handful of additional U.S. Senate Democrats to vote for Republicans’ stopgap spending bill to reopen government.

But, in the meantime, White House officials plan to lay off federal workers en masse, a dramatic and unsettling step that’s not traditionally been taken during past shutdowns.

“We’re going to have to take extraordinary measures to ensure the people’s government operates — again not perfectly because it’s not going to operate perfectly in the midst of a shutdown — but operates as well as it possibly can,” Vance said.

Any Democrats concerned about the impacts of layoffs on federal programs or people’s lives, Vance said, should vote to advance a seven-week stopgap spending bill that has stalled in the Senate. Senate and House Democrats say they will not support a GOP path to reopen the government unless Republicans agree to negotiate on rising health care costs.

Typically during a shutdown, some federal employees are categorized as exempt, meaning they work through-

out the funding lapse. Others are furloughed. All receive back pay once Congress funds the government, under a 2019 law.

Widescale layoffs were not part of the 2013 shutdown or the 2018-2019 shutdown that took place during the first Trump administration.

Vance during the White House briefing placed blame for the shutdown on Democrats, as the Trump administration ramped up similar rhetoric, including on government agency websites that said the “radical left in Congress” is at fault.

“Three moderate Democrats joined 52 Republicans last night. We need five more in order to reopen the government and that’s really where we’re going to focus, is how to get those five additional Democrats,” Vance said.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during the same briefing that layoffs for federal employees are “imminent” but declined to say what percentage of workers would be let go or share any other details.

Leavitt indicated that White House budget director Russ Vought would release those details “soon,” saying she didn’t want to get ahead of that office.

“These (Reductions in Force) are unfortunately going

to have to happen very soon,” Leavitt said.

## EFFECTS ON KEY PROGRAMS

The administration expects several programs will be impacted by the shutdown, including new enrollees in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC.

Leavitt said the funding lapse means “1.3 million active duty troops will work now without pay; critical food assistance for low-income women, infants and children will now lapse, no new mothers or children are allowed to join this critical program because of the Democrats’ decision to shut down the government; telehealth services for seniors and in-home treatment options for Medicare patients will now come to an end; nearly 50,000 members of the United States Coast Guard are going to have to work unpaid; over 13,000 air traffic controllers will work without pay as well as TSA agents, which will very likely create flight disruptions; and pay will now stop for over 150,000 federal law enforcement officers.

“These are not just numbers and statistics, these are real Americans who have families at home. And I saw some Democrat members today say-

ing they’re still going to accept their paychecks because they have three kids at home and they have mouths to feed. Well, so do these federal workers.”

Members of Congress, the president and federal judges must receive their salary under various provisions in the Constitution. While some lawmakers have publicly asked for their paychecks to be withheld until the government reopens, that’s not a legal option.

They could, however, donate their salaries to charity, which they can do regardless of whether the government is shut down.

## ‘MAFIA-STYLE THREAT’

The threat to fire federal workers en masse has already prompted a lawsuit in a Northern California district court, arguing the executive branch has no statutory authority to fire federal workers during a government shutdown.

There were roughly 2.2 million federal workers throughout the country as of July 1, with large portions of them living in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Texas and Virginia. Roughly 30% of the workforce is made up of veterans.

Maryland’s Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen told States Newsroom on Wednesday

morning that his office has not heard of any federal workers in his state being fired, and even if it were the case, “it’s illegal.”

“The president has no additional authority, in a shutdown, to fire people,” Van Hollen said. “This is just a mafia-style threat and blackmail.”

He didn’t detail what plans Democrats have to prevent those potential firings, but called them unlawful and pointed to the lawsuit filed in California by labor unions representing more than 1 million federal employees. Those unions are the American Federation of Government Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner made similar remarks, saying “the president has no enhanced powers during the shutdown so his ability to randomly and arbitrarily fire is not enhanced.”

North Dakota Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer said Democrats “don’t have the high ground in this situation” and need to pass the GOP stopgap bill so that the government can reopen.

But Cramer said he’s concerned the White House budget office will go too far in implementing a shutdown, including mass layoffs, and

could create challenges for Republican lawmakers.

“I worry a little bit that they could be counterproductive for us politically in the long run, because other things are going to require 60 votes again,” Cramer said.

Legislation needs the support of at least 60 senators to advance toward final passage, a rule that typically leads to compromise and bipartisan-ship in that chamber.

Sen. Tim Kaine, Democrat of Virginia, said he hopes lawmakers can strike a deal to prevent the Trump administration from firing more federal workers. He said Congress has specifically carved out protections for federal workers, such as in 2019 when lawmakers included a provision to give back pay to furloughed federal workers.

“So it used to be we had to fight about back pay after the shutdown,” he said. “Now everybody’s guaranteed back pay, so they have that as a backstop that they can count (on).”

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said during a press conference Wednesday President Donald Trump’s administration “has been engaging in” the mass firings of federal workers since Trump took office on Jan 20.

## DYEHOUSE

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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.”

Flanagan spoke to the Commonwealth Journal on Thursday to talk about her reasons for creating the petition. After her child came home afraid because of the alleged threats, Flanagan tried to speak with Dyehouse about safety protocols in public at the Fall Festival, resulting in a verbal altercation during which she said she was “screamed” at by Dyehouse, and said that he “kept dismissing me (and) would not take me seriously.”

“My concern was that my kid was scared, and whenever I addressed it to (Dyehouse), the way that he handled it made it way much worse than what it should have been,” said Flanagan.

After the altercation, she said she “started getting phone calls (from other people) who had had similar instances with him, and then this just snowballed into me hearing of things that he has done to kids at school when there had been an issue, and even when there hasn’t,” as

well as, said Flanagan, “using fear and intimidation tactics” with school personnel.

Flanagan also said that on Monday, she was informed by her child and also heard from others about a meeting with fifth-graders involving School Resource Officer Glen Bland in which disciplinary threats were made that involved all students in that grade and were very concerning to her and her child.

She said she wanted to make it clear that while people may think the petition is in regard to this one specific incident, “it is not, and I would not be doing this if I did not have credible things that I cannot turn a blind eye to.”

Dyehouse declined to speak further to the Commonwealth Journal on Thursday, noting that he’d already made comments regarding the situation earlier in the week.

He added, “In response to any allegations made about me personally(,) I must leave that to my attorney.”

Science Hill Board of Education member Lisa Holt told the Commonwealth Journal Thursday that she couldn’t yet speak on Flanagan’s petition, and couldn’t give any comment about the situation. She did say that from her understanding, the board meeting would involve going into executive session.

In addition to Flanagan’s petition, there has been another created on petitions.com — this one in support of Dyehouse. Created by Jennifer Price, another parent of a student at Science Hill, it says, “We acknowledge that schools face challenges and that not every decision or situation is

easy. However, we also believe that these challenges should be addressed through respectful dialogue, accountability, and constructive collaboration— not through division or calls for resignation.

The petition also says that “(t)he staff within our school always have the children’s best interests at heart, working daily with dedication and care,” that “students and staff both deserve a stable, supportive, and encouraging environment where trust and respect guide decisions,” and that “@onstructive communication between parents, staff, administration, and the school board is the most effective path toward solutions.”

Price’s petition “respectfully oppose(s) petitions calling for the resignation of Superintendent/Principal Jimmy Dyehouse,” it said, instead, calling on the community to “(e)ngage respectfully in open dialogue with school leadership, “(s)upport teachers and school staff who work tirelessly for our students, “(f)ocus on collaboration, unity, and solutions that strengthen our school for everyone.”

By 4 p.m. Thursday, Price’s petition had 61 signatures.

“The reason behind why I support Dyehouse is that he has (taken) care of not only my children, but his actions (were) in protocol of school’s conduct,” said Price, who noted that she hasn’t seen Flanagan’s petition and had no comment on it in speaking with the Commonwealth Journal on Thursday.

“As a parent of students that go to Science Hill, I have always backed (Dyehouse), my children have always felt safe

at that school, I feel safe with my children at that school. I trust every decision that he makes, and we are all human,” said Price. “... He has asked for forgiveness (in his comments to the Commonwealth Journal) and he apologized for whatever transpired.”

Price noted that she wasn’t involved in the situation and didn’t witness any of the incidents that have been talked about. She said that she has “never had an issue or concern or anything like that,” she added.

The petition “is to protect Dyehouse too, to keep his job, but it is for the whole school in its entirety to not lose its reputation” as a safe school, she said.

Dyehouse has been at Science Hill School, a single-facility district in northern Pulaski serving students up through the eighth grade, since 2016, starting as principal before replacing Rick Walker as superintendent in 2017.

The notice for the special board meeting specifies that is to “discuss and take possible action on” one agenda item, “(a)llegations made against the school and the personnel.” No other business will be conducted.

“This will be a closed session called under KRS 61.810 for limited legal reasons such as personnel or litigation,” reads the notice. While the entire meeting cannot be closed to the public, the executive session portion of a meeting is typically called just after the meeting is officially called to order, and is exited before the meeting is officially concluded.

## HUNT

CONTINUED FROM 1

in whatever role I was in at that point,” Hunt said. “I told Mayor Keck I would never run against him as long as I felt like he was doing an adequate and good job. And he’s continued to do well.”

But with Keck’s announcement that he will not be running for mayor next year, that left the door open for Hunt to run, he said.

He said that part of his goal as mayor would be to continue “the strong economic momentum Somerset has experienced under Mayor Alan Keck’s administration.”

Hunt said, “Somerset has come so far in the last six years, and I am incredibly proud of the work that has been done to revitalize our downtown and grow our economy under Mayor Keck’s leadership. I have learned a tremendous amount during this time of rebirth for our community that I will apply as Somerset’s mayor. I look forward to fostering strong relationships with the Chamber and the Somerset-Pulaski Economic Development Authority (SPEDA) to ensure this renaissance continues.”

Hunt said he feels like economic development is a key role for the city, and that SPEDA does a great job trying to attract and recruit businesses and industries to the area.

At the same time, though,

Hunt said, “I also believe we shouldn’t just sit back and throw it all on them and hope it works out,” meaning that as mayor he plans to “get out from behind the desk” and work face-to-face with business owners to recruit them himself.

He also said that the city needs to continue to support area tourism as well as expand parks and recreations programs for the community. “It’s very important to have quality of life in our community, that also helps to attract people here,” he said.

Because of his public safety background, he also views public safety to be vital to the community.

“I think that even though I have a background in policing, something the average person may not realize is that profession changes every year. New laws come out, new techniques, new policies, better ways of doing things. So I will not only lean on (SPD) Chief (Josh) Wesley, but also (EMS) Chief (Tracy) Sizemore and (Fire) Chief (Bengie) Howard on what they believe is best for our community and support them in any way we can.”

He continued: “I think it’s important that we just make sure we have the right size for our emergency services, to ensure that the best quality service is being provided. I think it’s important that we stay financially responsible within the city, and look at that we are being the best stewards of taxpayers’ dol-

lars, and part of that decision is, if we look at cuts, we also have to ensure that we’re not cutting benefits from our employees, but also ensuring that our first responders have what they need while also making sure we’re not cutting resources and services to our community. We want to make sure that we’re providing world-class services to our community, because that’s what they want from us.”

While he said he believes his professional background would help him in the role of mayor, he also believes his outside affiliations would help as well. Hunt is a deacon and active member of First Baptist Church of Somerset, where he volunteers on the security team. He also volunteers with Habitat for Humanity, the Pulaski County Housing Coalition, the American Cancer Society, and the Somerset Walk to End Alzheimer’s.

“In my opinion, government is about people,” he said.” That is my job as a politician, as a government employee. We should be focusing on people and serving them. But ... having those connections outside of my normal job, I think, only helps. And the reason I say that is, I think success is built on relationships, and by having relationships with many people not only within government but outside of government, too, hopefully (that) will help foster a trusting relationship between the mayor’s office and our community, to where they know

what our intentions are to help this community be the best version of this community that it can be. If there’s something that community member needs, and we have the resources and the ability to do it, we’re going to do everything that we can to help them.”

To that end, Hunt said that if he is elected, he would be bringing a version of the community oriented policing program that he put in place while chief – something similar called community oriented governing.

That program would see the government “collaborate with residents, ensuring challenges are addressed and city services are provided at the highest and most transparent level,” he said.

Hunt is a life-long resident of Somerset. He is married to Carla Hunt, and the two have four children.

He is the son of the late Roy Hunt, who was a U.S. Army veteran as well as a police officer, deputy sheriff and jailer.

“My father was known for being a public servant,” Hunt said. “I don’t know if it’s ever been subconsciously in my mind, or I just truly realized it, but my father was known for being a good man, being someone who helped people in the community, and I’ve strived to live up to that name and that image.”

Carla Slavey can be reached at cslavey@somerset-kentucky.com

## THURSDAY CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

- 1 Disgusted
- 6 Hawk’s grabber
- 11 Peace goddess
- 12 Rust, for one
- 13 Film legend Garbo
- 14 Metal fastener
- 15 Suggests
- 17 Sinking signal
- 19 Binary digit
- 20 Dr. of rap
- 23 German vowel

topper

- 25 Barking beast
- 26 Ability to spend freely
- 28 “A Death in the Family” author
- 29 Asian capital
- 30 Snooze
- 31 Use a ray-gun on
- 32 Toronto-to-D.C. dir.

- 33 Whipped cream helping
- 35 Godzilla’s home
- 38 Make blank
- 41 In the know
- 42 Folded foods
- 43 Liquefies
- 44 Luges

### DOWN

- 1 Greek export
- 2 Screw up
- 3 Dead-to-the-world state
- 4 Golden Rule word
- 5 Thick fog
- 6 Rich dessert

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O	T	I	S		C	O	Y	O	T
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C	H	A	N	T		E	D	U	C
H	A	L	E			P	I	P	E

Yesterday’s answer

- 7 Symmetry line
- 8 Tyler of “The Lord of the Rings”
- 9 Keats work
- 10 Catch
- 16 All things considered
- 17 African nation
- 18 Letter after psi
- 20 Probe’s destination
- 21 Billing info
- 22 Cow of commercials
- 24 Bonobo, e.g.
- 25 Runner on snow
- 27 Some pills
- 31 Map areas
- 33 Blowgun ammo
- 34 Test type
- 35 Copier problem
- 36 Really impress
- 37 Bud
- 39 Lawn material
- 40 Snaky shape

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